

HAMAS'S HUMAN SHIELD STRATEGY IN GAZA

By ANDREW FOX and SALO AIZENBERG



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By Andrew Fox and Salo Aizenberg

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Cover image: The entrance to the tunnel where hostages Hersh Goldberg-Polin, Eden Yerushalmi, Ori Danino, Alex Lobanov, Carmel Gat, and Almog Sarusi were murdered by Hamas terrorists and later found by troops (© IDF 2024).

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About Us



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About The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society is a think-tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free, working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.



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The **Centre for New Middle East** is a one-stop shop designed to provide opinion-leaders and policy-makers with the fresh thinking, analytical research and policy solutions required to make geopolitical progress in one of the world's most complicated and fluid regions.

Established following the fallout from the Arab Spring, the Centre is dedicated to monitoring political, ideological, and military and security developments across the Middle East and providing informed assessments of their wide-ranging implications to key decision makers.

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Executive Summary

Since 7 October 2023, the UN has issued 367 reports that are filed under the subject of “Gaza Strip”.¹ A search of these reports reveals that the UN has rarely acknowledged and never asserted the use by Hamas of “human shields”. The phenomenon of “human shields” has only been mentioned four times, in each case in only a single sentence, as either an “allegation”, an Israeli “claim” or an unverified “report” that this practice occurred. The UN has never dedicated a single paragraph, let alone an entire report, to analysing how Hamas has fought the war in Gaza.

In contrast, the UN has issued at least ten reports critical of Israel's conduct in Gaza, from accusations of “indiscriminate attacks” to illegal “attacks on hospitals”. A November 2024 investigative report by the UN accused Israel of committing genocide, but the document makes no mention of Hamas's fighting tactics in Gaza, let alone provides an analysis. The NGOs (non-governmental organisations) Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch each released reports in December 2024 accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza. Over hundreds of pages of text, the reader would struggle to realise that Hamas even exists in Gaza. Neither report provides any discussion or analysis of Hamas's human shield strategy.

This report by the Henry Jackson Society represents the “missing chapter” in all the UN and NGO reports. It provides a comprehensive analysis of Hamas's systematic use of human shield tactics during the 7 October Israel–Hamas war and the broader Gaza conflict. Drawing on extensive evidence from international media, military assessments, legal frameworks and first-hand accounts, the report outlines how Hamas has embedded its military operations within civilian infrastructure, weaponising Gaza's population and urban landscape to achieve both tactical and strategic objectives

¹ A document search on the UN's “The Question of Palestine” website (<https://www.un.org/unispal/documents>) for any form of “report” with the “Document subject” of “Gaza Strip” from 7 October 2023 through 1/15/2023 yielded 367 results; each mention of the word “shield” was then reviewed to assess the usage of Hamas and “human shields” in the UN document.

Key Findings

- Hamas has deliberately and systematically exploited Gaza's civilian infrastructure to shield its military assets from attack by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), violating the prohibition of the use of civilian shields under the Law of Armed Conflict. Hamas has employed ten distinct human shield strategies that knowingly place the civilian population at high risk of harm throughout the 7 October Israel-Hamas war.
- Hamas's senior leadership has openly admitted to using human shields since gaining control of Gaza nearly 20 years ago, and similarly during the 7 October war. Hamas leaders have also boasted about their willingness to sacrifice civilian lives in what they consider an acceptable cost in their war against Israel.
- Leading international political and military leaders have verified and documented Hamas's use of human shields both in past conflicts and in the current war. US leadership has been particularly vocal in criticising Hamas for its use of human shields, citing the strategy as being a major reason why many civilians have been harmed in the 7 October war. The EU has specifically condemned Hamas's use of human shields after 7 October.
- Historical evidence, extensive third-party reporting, Hamas propaganda videos and IDF-sourced evidence confirm Hamas's illegal exploitation of civilian locations for military purposes. Despite significant independent, non-IDF evidence of Hamas's human shield strategy, large segments of the mainstream media and numerous NGOs and observers consistently downplay, ignore or express scepticism regarding Hamas's use of this strategy.
- The IDF has provided thousands of high-quality videos and photographs of its activities in Gaza that prove without doubt that Hamas has militarised large portions of the civilian infrastructure of the Gaza Strip. However, even when Hamas's human shield tactics are plainly evident, they are often presented by the media as unsubstantiated claims, and not as a leading cause of civilian casualties in Gaza.
- The UN and many NGOs accusing Israel of war crimes and genocide deliberately disregard Hamas's human shield strategy. This glaring omission erases Hamas as an active party in the conflict, instead placing full blame for civilian casualties on Israel. All of the evidence documented in this report is absent from UN and NGO reports that discuss the war in Gaza.
- A proper evaluation of the 7 October war must assess the full range of tactics used by Hamas to engage in combat against incoming IDF forces. After the attack on 7 October, Hamas was aware that Israel was going to invade Gaza to recover hostages and attack Hamas assets. The human shield strategy was intended to impede the IDF's efforts and to generate worldwide condemnation of Israel when civilians were inevitably killed on the urban battlefield. This report documents Hamas's human shield strategy, providing a tool for the researchers, media and NGOs that continue to cover the 7 October Israel-Hamas war.

This report reveals that Hamas's human shield strategy not only violates international law but also exacerbates civilian suffering and complicates the resolution of the Gaza conflict. It underscores the necessity of confronting these tactics with evidence-based reporting, rigorous legal scrutiny and a commitment to safeguarding civilian lives. By exposing these realities, this report aims to contribute to a more balanced and informed global discourse on the conflict.

Introduction

Hamas attacked Israel on 7 October 2023 in a barbaric assault that killed 1200 Israelis, including over 800 civilians, with an additional 251 taken hostage. Even as Israel was still collecting bodies from devastated communities in southern Israel, and well before the IDF's ground entry into Gaza, NGOs and academics were already levelling charges of genocide against Israel. For example, on 15 October 2023, a group of nearly 900 academics made a statement warning of genocide in Gaza.² Claims of genocide were formally charged against Israel by South Africa in an application filed at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in December 2023.³ While the case at the ICJ will take years to litigate, many observers falsely asserted that the ICJ considered genocide in Gaza to be "plausible".⁴ In September 2024, a UN Special Committee issued a report that concluded that "policies and practices of Israel during the reporting period are consistent with the characteristics of genocide,"⁵ followed up in December 2024 by reports from the NGOs Amnesty International (Amnesty)⁶ and Human Rights Watch (HRW)⁷ claiming Israel was committing genocide in Gaza.

What is immediately apparent in all scholarly articles, NGO publications, court filings and UN reports charging Israel with genocide is the effective removal of Hamas as a relevant party to the conflict in Gaza. Hamas's actions on 7 October are typically acknowledged and condemned, but regarded as little more than one dreadful day of criminal acts by Hamas in the context of a broader conflict that is primarily Israel's fault. But beginning on 8 October, Hamas has been treated as a non-actor in Gaza – it is as if the IDF is not engaging in combat with a potent military force in Gaza that prepared the battlefield for an IDF entry over a 17-year period, but is attacking defenceless civilians for the sole purpose of killing them. By the end of January 2025, the IDF had suffered 405 soldiers killed in action and more than 2500 had been wounded. This demonstrates that there is clearly aggressive force-on-force combat challenging the IDF in Gaza.⁸ The removal of Hamas as an actor in the conflict necessarily means that there is no mention of Hamas's human shield strategy, whereby the militant group has intentionally embedded its core military infrastructure within large areas of civilian Gaza.

This report demonstrates that Hamas's use of Gaza's civilian infrastructure for its military operations and combat tactics is indisputable. There is widespread acknowledgement that Hamas has built a vast tunnel network beneath densely populated urban areas of Gaza, estimated to be around 500 kilometres long. Extensive documentation of this tunnel network existed well before 7 October, including numerous investigative video reports from Al Jazeera.⁹

² "Public Statement: Scholars Warn of Potential Genocide in Gaza", *TWAILR*, 17 October 2023, <https://twailr.com/public-statement-scholars-warn-of-potential-genocide-in-gaza/>.

³ "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)", International Court of Justice, 29 December 2023, <https://t.co/nfooPbClrn>.

⁴ UN Watch, "ICJ 'didn't decide claim of genocide was plausible' nor 'that there's a plausible case of genocide'", *YouTube* video, 26 April 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bq9MB9t7WII>.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, A/79/363, 20 September, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a79363-report-special-committee-investigate-israeli-practices-affecting>.

⁶ Amnesty International, "Amnesty International Concludes Israel Is Committing Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza", 5 December 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/>.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Extermination and Acts of Genocide: Israel Deliberately Depriving Palestinians in Gaza of Water", December 19 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/12/19/extermination-and-acts-genocide/israel-deliberately-depriving-palestinians-gaza>.

⁸ "Swords of Iron: IDF casualties", Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2025, <https://www.gov.il/en/pages/swords-of-iron-idf-casualties>.

⁹ "The Gaza Tunnels", *Al Jazeera*, 5 August 2014, <https://www.aljazeera.com/program/witness/2014/8/5/the-gaza-tunnels>; "Al-Jazeera Report on Hamas' Tunnel Complex in Gaza: Tunnels Suffered Only Limited Damage, Are Operational And Constitute A Strategic Weapon For Future War With Israel", *Al Jazeera*, 5 June 2021, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/jazeera-report-hamas-tunnels-gaza-limited-damage-operational-strategic-weapon-war-israel>.

Hamas leaders have openly acknowledged that the tunnel network is intended to provide protection solely for their combatants, leaving the civilian population to fend for themselves above ground.¹⁰ However, Hamas's strategy of using human shields is far more extensive and complex than just the tunnels, as this report outlines.

The Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) defines the criminal act of human shields as "Utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas or military forces immune from military operations."¹¹ Hamas's use of human shields increases the likelihood, and often ensures, that any military action by the IDF against Hamas will result in civilian casualties. This tactic is designed to force Israel into the dilemma of either attacking Hamas targets with the knowledge that civilians will often be killed, incurring significant international criticism and calls for Israel to halt its military actions, or allowing Hamas to achieve permanent immunity for fear of harming civilians.

In several previous rounds of conflict between Hamas and Israel, such as in 2009 and 2014, the human shield tactic was effective: Israel greatly limited its operations in Gaza due to the high expected collateral damage that would result from a full assault against Hamas and its infrastructure. However, after the scale of the Hamas attack on 7 October, the ongoing hostage situation and Hamas's threats to attack again,¹² Israel assessed that the military necessity of action against Hamas had escalated to a level that removed previous restraints on attacks against the group.

There is no dispute that the use of human shields by Hamas does not absolve Israel from complying with the LOAC, such as the principles of distinction and proportionality. However, Hamas's tactics must be properly acknowledged and assessed when evaluating Israel's military actions in Gaza.

This paper demonstrates that Hamas's use of human shields is not merely an operational tactic but a deliberate and strategic policy, explicitly aimed at restricting IDF military responses and causing intentional civilian casualties. From its inception in 2006, the Hamas leadership has openly endorsed and developed this strategy, embedding its military infrastructure within civilian areas and suppressing local dissent. Hamas intentionally places civilians at risk, exploiting their deaths to delegitimise Israel internationally and leverage global media coverage and diplomatic pressure as political weapons. This approach has been publicly acknowledged and praised by Hamas leaders, reflecting their willingness – even determination – to sacrifice civilian lives to advance their broader strategic and ideological goals.

A stark example of the refusal to examine Hamas's human shield strategy is the admission by a UN official regarding a June 2024 report released by the organisation titled "Children and Armed Conflict".¹³ When the UN official was asked by a reporter why the issue of Hamas's use of human shields was overlooked, with only one vague comment about "reports" that Hamas engaged in such practices, the official replied that "word count" constraints limited the discussion of the topic.¹⁴ Instead of being central to the discussion of civilian harm in Gaza, the UN treated the issue of human shields as a non-factor.

¹⁰ "Hamas Official Mousa Abu Marzouk: The Tunnels In Gaza Were Built To Protect Hamas fighters, Not Civilians; Protecting Gaza Civilians Is The Responsibility Of The U.N. And Israel", *Russia Today TV*, 27 October 2023, available at: <https://www.memri.org/reports/hamas-official-mousa-abu-marzouk-tunnels-gaza-were-built-protect-hamas-fighters-not>.

¹¹ "Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 17 July 1998: Article 8 – War crimes", International Humanitarian Law Databases, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/icc-statute-1998/article-8>.

¹² MEMRI (@MEMRIReports), X post, 4 November 2023, 2:19pm, <https://x.com/MEMRIReports/status/1720807863054942528>.

¹³ "Children and Armed Conflict", UN General Assembly Security Council, 3 June 2024, <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=S%2F2024%2F384&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>.

¹⁴ United Nations, "UN reports 'shocking' rise in violations against children in conflict in 2023", *YouTube* video, 45:24, posted by UN, 13 June 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZogPG3v3BgY>.

This report can therefore be characterised as the “missing chapter” from all the so-called “genocide” reports noted previously – the chapter that exposes how Hamas rigged every element of the civilian infrastructure of Gaza, reverse engineering the rules of war, to create a dense, 360-degree urban battlefield unprecedented in military history. This missing chapter documents how Hamas’s human shield strategy directly led to a substantial number of civilian casualties. It demonstrates how Israel’s attacks on Hamas targets, such as tunnels and shafts, booby-trapped buildings, Hamas combatants fighting from within residential homes and rockets stored and fired from humanitarian zones, resulted in unavoidable collateral damage. The UN and NGOs deliberately omit this chapter because an honest assessment of this critical aspect of the conflict would undermine their entire argument that Israel is deliberately targeting civilians, instead proving that civilian harm in Gaza is largely due to how Hamas is fighting the war, not Israel.

Overview of Hamas's Human Shield Strategy

Origin of Hamas's human shield strategy

Hamas's human shield strategy dates back to 2006, soon after Hamas took control of the Palestinian Legislative Council. After a rocket was fired at Israel from the residential home of Popular Resistance Committee member Mohammed Baroud, local Hamas leader Nizar Rayan called on residents to crowd the rooftop of the building with the expectation that Israel would not strike the location of the rocket fire, given the presence of many civilians. The strategy worked and the IDF called off the strike, despite an advance warning it gave to Baroud of an impending airstrike. Al Jazeera reported the incident, openly admitting to Hamas's human shield strategy in the title of its article: "Palestinians form human shield: Hundreds of Palestinians form a human shield against Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza strip".¹⁵ The article noted that "Israel routinely orders residents out of their homes ahead of airstrikes on suspected weapons-storage facilities, saying it wants to avoid casualties." The article quotes Nizar Rayan, a local Hamas leader who joined the protest: "We came here to protect this fighter, to protect his house and to prove that we are capable of defeating this Zionist policy."¹⁶ In this manner, asymmetric combatants aim to exploit the Law of Armed Conflict to prevent attacks from conventional opponents.

This human shield action was lauded by Ismail Haniyeh, who at the time was the Palestinian Prime Minister and would later go on to lead Hamas. He said:

We are so proud of this national stand. It's the first step toward protecting our homes, the homes of our children... This strategy was decided by our people. [It] was decided by our leaders, who were here from all the factions... and so long as this strategy is in the interest of our people we support this strategy.¹⁷

The human shield strategy evolved, eventually encompassing all aspects of the civilian infrastructure of Gaza. Palestinian humanitarian activist Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, who grew up in Gaza over this time period, explained how this military strategy expanded, and that local dissent was brutally suppressed:

Partly due to the urban nature of Gaza, and partly by embedding its activities and assets among the civilian population, Hamas's infrastructure grew increasingly intertwined with civilian infrastructure and populations. This despite numerous occasions in which people in Gaza would object to rocket launches firing near their homes, tunnels being dug underneath their properties, or hidden stockpiles being placed close to their businesses and houses. Hamas mostly used the stick approach to silence opposition to its militant encroachment upon civilian areas and neighborhoods.¹⁸

Hamis leaders admit to using human shields

Hamis leaders have encouraged and lauded the human shield strategy over the 17 years of Hamas rule in Gaza leading up to 7 October. There are many documented examples. In 2008, soon after Hamas took control of Gaza, Hamas official Fathi Hammad delivered a speech on Al-Aqsa TV:

¹⁵ "Palestinians form human Shield", *Al Jazeera*, 19 November 2006, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/11/19/palestinians-form-human-shield>; Conal Urquhart, "Palestinians use human shield to halt Israeli air strike on militants' homes", *The Guardian*, 20 November 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/20/israel>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Urquhart, "Palestinians use human shield to halt Israeli air strike on militants' homes".

¹⁸ Ahmed Fouad Alkhatib, "The Origin of Hamas's Human Shields Strategy in Gaza | Opinion", *Newsweek*, 26 February 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/origin-hamass-human-shields-strategy-gaza-opinion-1873499>.

[The enemies of Allah] do not know that the Palestinian people has developed its [methods] of death and death-seeking. For the Palestinian people, death has become an industry, at which women excel, and so do all the people living on this land. The elderly excel at this, and so do the *mujahideen*¹⁹ and the children. This is why they have formed human shields of the women, the children, the elderly, and the *mujahideen*, in order to challenge the Zionist bombing machine. It is as if they were saying to the Zionist enemy: "We desire death like you desire life."²⁰

During the 2014 Gaza war, Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri, speaking on Al-Aqsa TV, specifically encouraged the use of human shields. After being asked to comment on how civilians went up to the rooftops of buildings that the IDF had warned it would strike, Zuhri said:

This attests to the character of our noble, Jihad-fighting people, who defend their rights and their homes with their bare chests and their blood. The policy of people confronting the Israeli warplanes with their bare chests in order to protect their homes has proven effective against the occupation. Also, this policy reflects the character of our brave, courageous people. We in Hamas call upon our people to adopt this policy, in order to protect the Palestinian homes.²¹

Now deceased Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar admitted to hiding military bases in civilian areas in a statement he made on Al Jazeera Live in June 2021:

Regarding the [Hamas] military and security bases that are located among civilian residents [in the Gaza Strip], this was a serious problem in the previous stages, and we and the resistance factions made efforts to carry out an operation of gradual movement and transfer of a large number of these bases from among the civilian residents, and we succeeded in carrying out a large portion of it. But there is still a portion that needs to be transferred, and Allah willing this operation will continue.²²

Another former Hamas leader, Ismail Haniyeh, confirmed the group's readiness to sacrifice the lives of civilians to advance Hamas's war aims in comments made on Lebanon's *Mayadeen TV* on 26 October 2023:

I have said this before, and I say it time again. The blood of the women, children, and elderly... I am not saying that this blood is calling for your [help]. We are the ones who need this blood, so it awakens within us the revolutionary spirit, so it awakens within us resolve, so it awakens within us the spirit of challenge, and [pushes us] to move forward.²³

The open willingness to sacrifice civilian lives in Gaza has been repeated by other Hamas leaders during the current war. According to a June 2024 report in *The Wall Street Journal*, Sinwar cited civilian casualties as "necessary sacrifices".²⁴

The day after 7 October, senior Hamas official Ali Baraka told Russia Today TV: "The Israelis are known to love life. We, on the other hand, sacrifice ourselves. We consider our dead to

¹⁹ Islamist guerilla fighters.

²⁰ "Hamas MP Fathi Hammad: We Used Women and Children as Human Shields", *Al-Aqsa TV*, 29 February 2008, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-mp-fathi-hammad-we-used-women-and-children-human-shields>.

²¹ "Hamas Spokesman Encourages Gazans to Serve as Human Shields: It's Been Proven Effective", *Al-Aqsa TV*, 8 July 2014, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-spokesman-encourages-gazans-serve-human-shields-its-been-proven-effective>.

²² Palwatch, "Hamas terror leader admits they hide their military bases among civilians", *YouTube*, posted by palwatch, 21 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FjmyqYKBEU>.

²³ "Hamas Leader Ismail Haniyeh: We Need The Blood Of Women, Children, And The Elderly Of Gaza - So It Awakens Our Revolutionary Spirit", *Mayadeen TV (Lebanon)*, 26 October 2023, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/hamas-leader-ismail-haniyeh-gaza-bombing-new-holocaust-need-blood-women-children-elderly-awakens-spirit-resolve>.

²⁴ Summer Said and Rory Jones, "Gaza Chief's Brutal Calculation: Civilian Bloodshed Will Help Hamas", *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 June 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/gaza-chiefs-brutal-calculation-civilian-bloodshed-will-help-hamas-626720e7>.

be martyrs. The thing any Palestinian desires the most is to be martyred for the sake of Allah, defending his land.”²⁵

In an interview with Russia Today TV, another senior Hamas official, Mousa Abu Marzouk, was asked: “Many people are asking: Since you have built 500 kilometers of tunnels, why haven’t you built bomb shelters, where civilians can hide during bombardment?”²⁶ Marzouk replied: “We have built the tunnels because we have no other way of protecting ourselves from being targeted and killed. These tunnels are meant to protect us from the airplanes. We are fighting from inside the tunnels.” Marzouk effectively admitted that Hamas had no intention of protecting Gazan civilians, who were thus human shields for Hamas’s fighters.

As the war continues in Gaza, Palestinian Authority officials have been critical of Hamas’s actions in Gaza, calling out its use of human shields. A statement issued by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah Party on 11 January 2025, said that Hamas’s decision to launch the 7 October attack on Israel led to “catastrophic” conditions in Gaza and accused Hamas of using Gazan civilians “as human shields instead of protecting them and their homes”. The statement added that, “Hamas is now attempting to stir security chaos in the West Bank, thereby continuing its policy that brought disaster upon the Palestinian people.”²⁷

Hamas leadership continued to laud its human shield strategy even as the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas was announced in January 2025. Senior Hamas leader and key negotiator Khalil Al-Hayya glorified how civilians in Gaza “served as an ‘Impenetrable Shield’ for the Resistance”. He vowed to continue attacking Israel and considered the Hamas attack on 7 October and the overall war as a victory for Hamas.²⁸



²⁵ “Senior Hamas Official Ali Baraka: We Have Been Secretly Planning The Invasion For Two Years; Russia Sympathizes With Us, Benefits From U.S. Embroilment In This War; Any Swap Deal Should Include Hamas Prisoners in Europe And The U.S.”, *Russia Today TV*, 8 October 2023, available at: <https://www.memri.org/tv/senior-hamas-official-ali-baraka-prisoner-swap-america-planning-invasion-two-years-russia-support>.

²⁶ “Hamas Official Mousa Abu Marzouk: The Tunnels In Gaza Were Built To Protect Hamas Fighters...”, *Russia Today TV*.

²⁷ “Palestinian Authority condemns Hamas for using Gazan civilians ‘as human shields’”, *All Israel News*, 12 January 2025, <https://allisrael.com/palestinian-authority-condemns-hamas-for-using-gazan-civilians-as-human-shields/>; “Hamas and Fatah trade accusations amid PA crackdown on Palestinian militants in occupied West Bank”, *Ahram Online*, 11 January 2025; “Fatah Vows Not to Let Hamas Replicate Its Actions in West Bank, Slams Iran”, *The Times of Israel*, 21 April, 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/fatah-vows-not-to-let-hamas-replicate-its-actions-in-west-bank-slams-iran/>.

²⁸ MEMRI (@MEMRIReports), X post, 16 January 2025, 10:48am, <https://x.com/MEMRIReports/status/1879843148312215922>.

Worldwide leaders acknowledge and decry Hamas's human shield strategy

Hamás's human shield strategy is well documented and recognised by US and foreign political leaders, as well as by military and intelligence agencies. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, an international military organisation accredited by NATO and based in Riga, Latvia, was established by seven European NATO members in 2014. In 2019 it published a detailed report titled "Hamás's use of human shields in Gaza".²⁹ This report states that Hamas has been using human shields in conflicts with Israel since 2007, based on the organisation's awareness of Israel's desire to minimise collateral damage and its understanding that using human shields makes Hamas less vulnerable to IDF attacks.³⁰ The report also notes that Hamas recognises the sensitivity of public opinion regarding civilian harm, as the media often emphasises narratives focused on the suffering of innocent civilians.³¹ Additionally, the report outlines four common forms of Hamas's human shield tactics: (1) firing rockets and other projectiles from heavily populated areas, (2) positioning military infrastructure within or near civilian areas, (3) using human shields to protect the homes of Hamas militants, and (4) engaging the IDF from or near residential and commercial areas, including employing civilians for intelligence gathering.³²

Officials worldwide have widely confirmed the use of human shields by Hamas in the past and in the current war. In April 2018, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in the Gaza Strip that "strongly condemns the persistent tactic of Hamas of using civilians for the purpose of shielding terrorist activities."³³ On 12 November 2023, the 27 European Union nations jointly issued a statement about the 7 October war: "The EU condemns the use of hospitals and civilians as human shields by Hamas."³⁴

Former US President Biden criticised Hamas's strategy in a statement he made on 10 October 2023: "Hamás does not stand for the Palestinian people's right to dignity and self-determination. Its stated purpose is the annihilation of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people. They use Palestinian civilians as human shields. Hamas offers nothing but terror and bloodshed with no regard to who pays the price."³⁵ A few days later, Biden reiterated the same point: "Innocent Palestinian families, and the vast majority have nothing to do with Hamas, they're being used as human shields."³⁶ Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement in mid-January 2025, Biden restated this point to MSNBC journalist Lawrence O'Donnell: "...it's true, Sinwar and those guys were hiding beneath the hospital, the thing about ... Hamas is they had all their facilities underneath – schools, hospitals, churches ... and to get to them you had to take people out."³⁷

In a November 2023 press briefing, former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that Hamas "could stop using civilians as human shields and stop using civilian infrastructure to

²⁹ James Pamment, et al., "Hamás's use of human shields in Gaza", NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 6 June 2019, https://stratcomcoe.org/cuploads/pfiles/hamas_human_shields.pdf.

³⁰ Ibid., p.149.

³¹ Ibid., p.154.

³² Ibid., p.149.

³³ "European Parliament resolution of 19 April 2018 on the situation in the Gaza Strip", European Parliament, 19 April 2018, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0176_EN.html?redirect; Raphael Ahren, "In first, European Parliament condemns Hamas for terror, use of human shields", *The Times of Israel*, 19 April 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-first-european-parliament-condemns-hamas-for-terror-use-of-human-shields/>.

³⁴ "Statement by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on humanitarian pauses in Gaza", European Council, 12 November 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/11/12/statement-by-the-high-representative-on-behalf-of-the-european-union-on-humanitarian-pauses-in-gaza>.

³⁵ "Remarks by President Biden on the Terrorist Attacks in Israel", The White House, 10 October 2023, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/10/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-terrorist-attacks-in-israel-2/>.

³⁶ WSJ News, "Biden: Civilians in Gaza 'Being Used as Human Shields' | WSJ News", *YouTube* video, 15 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3H47vTKh3E>.

³⁷ Drop Site (@DropSiteNews), X post, 17 January 2025, 6:36am, <https://x.com/DropSiteNews/status/1880142151859728647>.

stage and launch terrorist attacks.” He added that “everyone around the world who cares about protecting innocent civilians, innocent lives, should be calling on Hamas – indeed, demanding of Hamas – that it immediately stop its murderous acts of terror and deplorable use of innocent men, women, and children as human shields.”³⁸ On 16 January 2025, during an interview on CNN with Christiane Amanpour to discuss the end of his term under the Biden Administration, Blinken was asked about Israel’s conduct in the war. Blinken said: “Uniquely, you have an enemy that intentionally embeds itself within the civilian population, in and under apartments, in and under schools, mosques, hospitals...”³⁹

Former US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin also detailed Hamas’s human shield strategy in a press conference on 18 December 2023:

Above and beyond that, we see that Hamas routinely uses civilians as shields. Beyond that, they place their headquarters and their logistical sites near protected sites, hospitals, mosques, churches, you name it. And so that adds to the complexity and as you’ve heard Jake Sullivan say it provides an additional burden for the forces that are prosecuting this fight.⁴⁰

US officials regularly cite Hamas’s human shield strategy as a key cause of civilian deaths in Gaza. For example, in October 2024, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller responded to a question regarding the death of a 19-year-old Gazan:

The thing that that question leaves out, as often happens, and I understand why, is the burden that Hamas bears. And not just the burden that Hamas bears by hiding behind humans and using humans as civilian shields... Hamas needs to stop hiding behind human shields.”⁴¹

On 13 October 2023, former US National Security Council Spokesperson John Kirby acknowledged Israel’s calls to move Gazan civilians out of harm’s way and Hamas’s efforts to undermine the evacuations by using civilians as human shields. Kirby explained:

But it’s pretty clear that what they’re [the IDF] trying to do is to the maximum extent possible avoid civilian casualties and also separate Hamas from the human shields. I mean, Hamas actually gave a counterorder telling Palestinians in Gaza to stay at home. Why? Because having human shields, they think, protects them.⁴²

Indeed, Hamas leadership called for Gazans to defy IDF evacuation orders as they knew that emptying northern Gaza of civilians would make it easier for Israel to separate Hamas fighters from civilians. Eyad Al-Bozom, a Hamas spokesperson, said: “We tell the people of northern Gaza and from Gaza City, stay put in your homes, and your places.”⁴³

Recently appointed Secretary of State Marco Rubio also specifically cited Hamas’s human shield strategy in his confirmation hearing. When discussing Israel’s action in Gaza, he said the IDF has to fight “against an enemy that does not wear a uniform, against an enemy that

³⁸ Antony J. Blinken, “Secretary Antony J. Blinken at a Press Availability”, U.S. Department of State, 30 November 2023, <https://2021-2025.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability-43/>.

³⁹ Christiane Amanpour (@amanpour), X post, 16 January 2025, 6:27pm, <https://x.com/amanpour/status/1879958645154181211>.

⁴⁰ CBS News, “Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin speaks to reporters during Israel trip”, YouTube video, 18 December 2023 (see at 27:42), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4oqe3dhA78&t=1s>.

⁴¹ Middle East Eye, “State spokesperson says ‘Hamas needs to stop hiding behind human shields’ after hospital bombing”, YouTube video, 16 October 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIoLThG77HQ>.

⁴² “IDF inside Gaza looking for hostages amid evacuation order”, ABC7 Eyewitness News, 13 October 2023, <https://abc7.com/hamas-israel-war-northern-gaza-evacuation-order/13907334/>.

⁴³ “Hamas tells Gaza residents to stay put as Israel ground offensive looms”, Reuters, 13 October 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-tells-gaza-residents-stay-home-israel-ground-offensive-looms-2023-10-13/>.

hides in tunnels, against an enemy that hides behind women and children, and puts them at the forefront and uses them as human shields, that's who Hamas is.”⁴⁴

British officials have also decried Hamas's human shield strategy. Former British Defence Secretary Sir Grant Shapps said:

The problem we have with Hamas is not just that they butchered and killed and raped those Israelis. It's that they also use their own Palestinian population – who are no friends of Hamas – as human shields, and they hide themselves amongst them. And so we understand and appreciate that it's a very difficult position for Israel to be in.⁴⁵

In a UN Security Council debate on 24 October 2023, Tom Tugendhat, then-UK Security Minister said: “We know that Hamas are using innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields; they have embedded themselves in civilian communities.”⁴⁶ During the same meeting, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock echoed the same point: “Hamas is playing with human suffering, using women and children in Gaza as human shields, hiding its weapons under supermarkets, apartment blocks, even hospitals – with obvious intent.”⁴⁷ Baerbock made similar remarks on 13 October 2023: “Hamas is now barricading itself behind more innocent people and is using them as a shield in Gaza...Their tunnels, their weapons depots and command centers are deliberately located in residential buildings, supermarkets and universities.”⁴⁸

In an interview on 16 October 2023, Italy's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani said that the Palestinian people “...are victims of Hamas, which uses them as human shields: Israel told them to get out, the terrorists impose them to stay.”⁴⁹

On 23 October 2023, addressing Parliament, French Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne said: “Hamas, acting as it did, has deliberately exposed, in a criminal and cynical manner, the entire population of Gaza, they use the population as a human shield.”⁵⁰

A joint statement issued by the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand in December 2023, stated: “Hamas must release all hostages, stop using Palestinian civilians as human shields, and lay down its arms.”⁵¹ UN Secretary-General António Guterres has been highly critical of Israel's conduct in the war, but he also acknowledged that “there are violations by Hamas when they have human shields”.⁵²

Hamas's strategy is well known to former US leaders familiar with the Israel-Palestine conflict. Former US President Clinton cited Hamas's human shield strategy while speaking at an event

⁴⁴ Raylan Givens (@JewishWarrior13), X post, 15 January 2025, 4:29pm, <https://x.com/JewishWarrior13/status/1879566634593181815>.

⁴⁵ Alexandra Rogers, “Israel-Hamas ceasefire is ‘untenable’, says Defence Secretary Grant Shapps”, *Sky News*, 25 October 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/israel-hamas-ceasefire-is-untenable-says-defence-secretary-grant-shapps-12992587>.

⁴⁶ “The Question of Palestine: Ongoing Crisis in Gaza – SecCo Open Debate”, United Nations, 24 October 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ongoing-crisis-in-gaza-secco-open-debate-press-release/>.

⁴⁷ “Speech by Foreign Minister Baerbock at the United Nations Security Council on the situation in the Middle East”, German Federal Foreign Office, 24 October 2023, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/newsroom/news/2628284-2628284>.

⁴⁸ “Hamas using Gaza population as ‘shield’: German foreign minister”, *Arab News*, 13 October 2023, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2390776/middle-east>.

⁴⁹ Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, Tajani: “Italy is against Hamas, not against Palestine but Israel must defend itself”, (*Il Messaggero*), 16 October 2023, https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2023/10/tajani-litalia-e-contro-hamas-non-contro-la-palestina-ma-israele-deve-difendersi-il-messaggero-2/.

⁵⁰ “Replay: French PM Élisabeth Borne reaffirms support of Israel”, *France 24*, 23 October 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/video/20231023-french-pm-%C3%A9lisabeth-borne-calls-for-aid-to-gaza-while-reaffirming-support-of-israel>.

⁵¹ “Joint Statement by the Prime Ministers of Australia, Canada and New Zealand”, Prime Minister of Canada, 12 December 2023, <https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2023/12/12/joint-statement-prime-ministers-australia-canada-and-new-zealand>.

⁵² “At Rafah crossing, Türk says both Israel and Hamas have committed war crimes”, United Nations, 8 November 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/11/1143362>.

in October 2024: "Hamas makes sure that they're shielded by civilians, they'll force you to kill civilians, if you want to defend yourself." ⁵³

President Obama, who held office during Hamas's rule in Gaza, noted in a statement he issued on the current war that: "Hamas' military operations are deeply embedded within Gaza – and its leadership seems to intentionally hide among civilians, thereby endangering the very people they claim to represent." ⁵⁴

There is clearly a unified international consensus and opposition to Hamas's human shield strategy. However, this has been broadly absent from much of the media and international NGO criticism of Israel's conduct of the war. Even Palestinians themselves have condemned the tactic.

Palestinian criticism of Hamas's use of human shields

While Gazan civilians are typically unwilling to expose Hamas's human shield strategy for fear of reprisals, ⁵⁵ it has been discussed by some Gazans who have left the territory and are in a safe position to speak about the subject. For example, former Gazan resident and author Jihad al-Saftawi explained that since its violent takeover in 2007, "Hamas has continued to normalize violence and militarization in every aspect of public and private life in Gaza." ⁵⁶ An unexpected example of criticism of Hamas was seen in a 5 November 2023 live broadcast from Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Gaza. An Al-Jazeera reporter interviewed an elderly man about recent evacuations. The man was critical of Israeli attacks but added: "As for the resistance – they come and hide among the people. Why are they hiding among the people? They can go to hell and hide there..." ⁵⁷ The reporter deliberately cut away in the middle of the interview, likely aware that Hamas wants to suppress these types of comments by regular Gazans.

A BBC report from July 2024 titled "Hamas faces growing public dissent as Gaza war erodes support" investigated ordinary Gazan attitudes towards Hamas. ⁵⁸ A local Gazan doctor told the BBC right outside a hospital: "I am an academic doctor, I had a good life, but we have a filthy [Hamas] leadership. They got used to our bloodshed, may God curse them! They are scum!" The report says that some Gazans "have publicly criticised Hamas for hiding the hostages in apartments near a busy marketplace, or for firing rockets from civilian areas." Another interviewee, who concealed his identity, said: "They did not build any safe shelters for people, they did not reserve enough food, fuel and medical supplies. If my family and I survive this war, I will leave Gaza, the first chance I get."

A *New York Times* investigative piece from June 2024 regarding the attitude of ordinary Gazans towards Hamas revealed anger at the callous disregard the organisation had for civilians in Gaza, specifically how Hamas was protected in "underground tunnels" while Gazans were "above ground with no protection". ⁵⁹ One Gazan interviewed said that Hamas "threw the Palestinian people into the bottom of the well." ⁶⁰

⁵³ Prem Thakker (@prem_thakker), X post, 31 October 2024, 3:39am, https://x.com/prem_thakker/status/1851831227902284122.

⁵⁴ Barack Obama, "Thoughts on Israel and Gaza", *Medium*, 23 October 2023, <https://barackobama.medium.com/my-statement-on-israel-and-gaza-a6c397f09a30>.

⁵⁵ Raja Abdulrahim and Iyad Abuheweila, "As war drags on, Gazans more willing to speak out against Hamas", *The New York Times*, 15 June 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/15/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-war.html>.

⁵⁶ Jihad al-Saftawi, "Hamas Built Tunnels Beneath My Family's Home in Gaza. Now It Lies in Ruin", *Time*, 13 February 2024, <https://time.com/6693896/hamas-tunnels-gaza-home-ruin/>.

⁵⁷ "Growing Criticism Of Hamas And Its Officials By Gaza Residents: They Brought A Needless War Upon Us; Our Lives Are Worthless In Their Eyes; We Yearn To See The End Of Hamas", MEMRI, 18 December 2023, <https://www.memri.org/reports/growing-criticism-hamas-and-its-officials-gaza-residents-they-brought-needless-war-upon-us>.

⁵⁸ Lucy Williamson and Rushdi Aboualouf, "Hamas faces growing public dissent as Gaza war erodes support", *BBC News*, 4 July 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0vewvp14zdo>.

⁵⁹ Abdulrahim and Abuheweila, "As war drags on".

⁶⁰ Ibid.

A September 2024 investigative article in *The New York Times* titled “Unwilling to Be Human Shields, Some Gazans Turn Gunmen Away From Shelters” describes how civilian residents acted to stop Hamas operatives from using the schools where they were sheltering.

The article recounts how Nasser al-Zaanin, who had taken refuge at the Abdul Kareem al-Aklouk school in Deir al Balah, turned away Hamas members who wanted to station themselves at the school.⁶¹

Military experts on Hamas's human shield strategy

Military experts worldwide have confirmed Hamas's human shield strategy and the violations of the LOAC committed by Hamas. Here are the viewpoints of several leading experts who have closely assessed the war in Gaza.

General Sir John McColl, a retired British Army officer who served as the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander of NATO from 2007–2011, visited the region with a group of military experts from six NATO countries. McColl wrote about his assessment of the war in *The Times* and commented on Hamas's human shield strategy:⁶²

The [Hamas] tunnels are used for fighters to move around the urban areas, appearing behind and on the flanks of troops. Suicide bombers are a constant threat. Many of the houses and tunnel entrances are booby-trapped and civilians are used as human shields. It means that in the confusion, regrettably, errors will occur.

Military leaders and experts from other NATO countries have also confirmed Hamas's human shield strategy. In an interview on French TV channel LCI, in November 2023, France's Minister of the Armed Forces Sébastien Lecornu noted that Israel had to do its best to protect civilians, but that Israel must be able to defend itself in the context where Hamas used human shields.⁶³

In August 2024, a group of military experts filed an *Amicus Curiae* to the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the “Situation in the State of Palestine”.⁶⁴ The group included 11 military and legal experts, including retired Italian general Vincenzo Camporini (former Chief of the Defence General Staff) and retired French Brigadier General Alain Lamballe.

The document they filed at the ICC commented on Hamas's human shield strategy:

It is common knowledge that Hamas consistently and pervasively embeds itself into the civilian population and complicates the distinction process, endangering civilians by not wearing uniforms or distinctive emblems. It uses civilians as human shields as a deliberate strategy. Add to that the holding of hostages, the length and complexity of the Hamas tunnel system, the number of rockets still being fired towards Israel (almost 10,000 since the start of the war), and this becomes the most complex and challenging battlefield of modern times.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Bilal Shbair and Matthew Mpoke Bigg, “Unwilling to Be Human Shields, Some Gazans Turn Gunmen Away From Shelters”, *The New York Times*, 10 September 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/10/world/middleeast/airstrikes-gaza-school-shelters-hamas.html>.

⁶² Sir John McColl, “I fought in Iraq – I know Israel's doing all it can to save civilians”, *The Times*, 11 September 2024, <https://www.thetimes.com/article/e2125279-cc23-4b9e-aeb8-f02191f27c88>.

⁶³ Clea Caulcutt and Laura Kayali, “Macron attempts damage control after comments criticizing Israel”, *Politico*, 13 November 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-france-israel-comments-benjamin-netanyahu/>.

⁶⁴ “Situation in the State of Palestine”, ICC, 5 August 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CourtRecords/0902ebd180920f26.pdf>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Dr. David Crane, a leading expert on the laws of war and the founding chief prosecutor of the international war crimes tribunal in West Africa, discussed the predicament Israel was in due to Hamas's human shield strategy:

Israel is in an impossible situation. It appears Israel is trying to follow the Geneva Convention and the law of armed conflict but, because the battlefield is one of the most densely populated areas on earth, and because Hamas has a history of hiding behind civilians, protecting the Palestinian people will be complex and civilian lives will be lost.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Cynthia McFadden, "Experts on how the laws of war apply to Hamas and the Israeli military", *NBC News*, 19 October 2023, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/experts-laws-war-apply-hamas-israeli-military-rcna120767>.

Human Shields and the Laws of Armed Combat

The use of human shields covers a wide range of actions under the LOAC. The main prohibition against human shields is enshrined in Geneva Convention IV Article 28 and again in Protocol I Article 51(7), which is more expansive. The key clause says:

The presence or movements of the civilian population or individual civilians shall not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations, in particular in attempts to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield, favour or impede military operations. The Parties to the conflict shall not direct the movement of the civilian population or individual civilians in order to attempt to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield military operations.⁶⁷

The 1998 Rome Statute, Article 8 (xxiii), lists the same actions as a violation of LOAC: “Utilizing the presence of a civilian or other protected person to render certain points, areas or military forces immune from military operations.”⁶⁸

Importantly, under the LOAC, the use of human shields, also known as civilian shields, *does not* necessitate the forced or voluntary relocation of civilians to military locations, as is sometimes asserted.⁶⁹ Merely the “presence” of civilians in a specific location, if it is intended to “impede” the opposing party from striking, constitutes a violation of the prohibition on human shields. Therefore, when Hamas constructs tunnels beneath city streets and access shafts from civilian buildings, places weapons in advance inside residential homes, launches rockets from within a school or utilises a hospital as a command centre, it is violating the provisions regarding civilian shields under the LOAC. In each instance, Hamas is deliberately employing the presence of civilians, who may be unaware of their circumstances, to shield its military assets from attack and obstruct Israeli strikes.

The prohibition on using shields is also covered in the LOAC specifically in regard to medical units. Geneva Protocol Article 12(4) states: “Under no circumstances shall medical units be used in an attempt to shield military objectives from attack. Whenever possible, the Parties to the conflict shall ensure that medical units are so sited that attacks against military objectives do not imperil their safety.”⁷⁰ The violation of hospitals as a shield again does not require the specific movement of civilians to the location; the use of this specially protected site for any military purpose is a violation of this clause, even if civilians are not aware of the hospital’s dual purpose.

While certain other Hamas practices covered in this report do not fall under the specific language of “shields” per the LOAC, for the purposes of this report, any action taken by Hamas that deliberately blurs the lines between civilians and combatants, thereby placing civilians at greater risk of being killed or wounded when the IDF strikes Hamas military assets, is considered a human shield tactic. The LOAC mandates that each party to a conflict should remove civilians from combat zones and avoid locating military objectives in populated areas,

⁶⁷ “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)”, International Humanitarian Law Databases, 8 June 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-51>.

⁶⁸ “Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court”, ICC, 2021, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-05/Rome-Statute-eng.pdf>.

⁶⁹ For example, an Amnesty report on Operation “Cast Lead” dismissed Israeli claims that Hamas used human shields because it found no evidence that Hamas directed or forced residents to move to or to stay in locations used by militants. However, this is not the only method of using human shields under the LOAC.

⁷⁰ “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949”, IHL Databases, 8 June 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-12>.

per Geneva Protocol Article 58, titled “Precautions against the effects of attacks”; Hamas violates all three requirements:

The Parties to the conflict shall, to the maximum extent feasible:

- (a) without prejudice to Article 49 of the Fourth Convention, endeavor to remove the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects under their control from the vicinity of military objectives;
- (b) avoid locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas;
- (c) take the other necessary precautions to protect the civilian population, individual civilians and civilian objects under their control against the dangers resulting from military operations.⁷¹

Another tactic that this report classifies as a human shield strategy is the practice by Hamas operatives of engaging in combat in civilian clothes, thereby making it difficult for the IDF to distinguish between combatants and civilians. This is prohibited under the LOAC per Geneva Protocol Article 37, “Prohibition of perfidy”, which considers “the feigning of civilian, non-combatant status” illegal.⁷²

The use of human shields by Hamas and the presence of civilians in combat areas do not absolve the IDF from its obligations to protect the civilian population under the LOAC. Israel remains obligated to comply with the mandates of Geneva Protocol Article 57, “Precautions in attack”, which outline the principles of distinction and proportionality. However, military targets in the vicinity of civilians do not lose their legitimacy simply because civilians or civilian objects are present, and there is no blanket prohibition preventing Israel from attacking such targets, even if an attack may knowingly result in civilian casualties.⁷³ The presence of civilians complicates the proportionality assessment, specifically whether the potential damage to civilians is “excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.”⁷⁴ Thus, Hamas's human shield strategy is effective, as it hinders the IDF's ability to legally strike any Hamas target. This is evidenced by numerous instances in which the IDF has called off strikes due to civilian presence.

⁷¹ “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949”, IHL Databases, 8 June 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-58?activeTab=>.

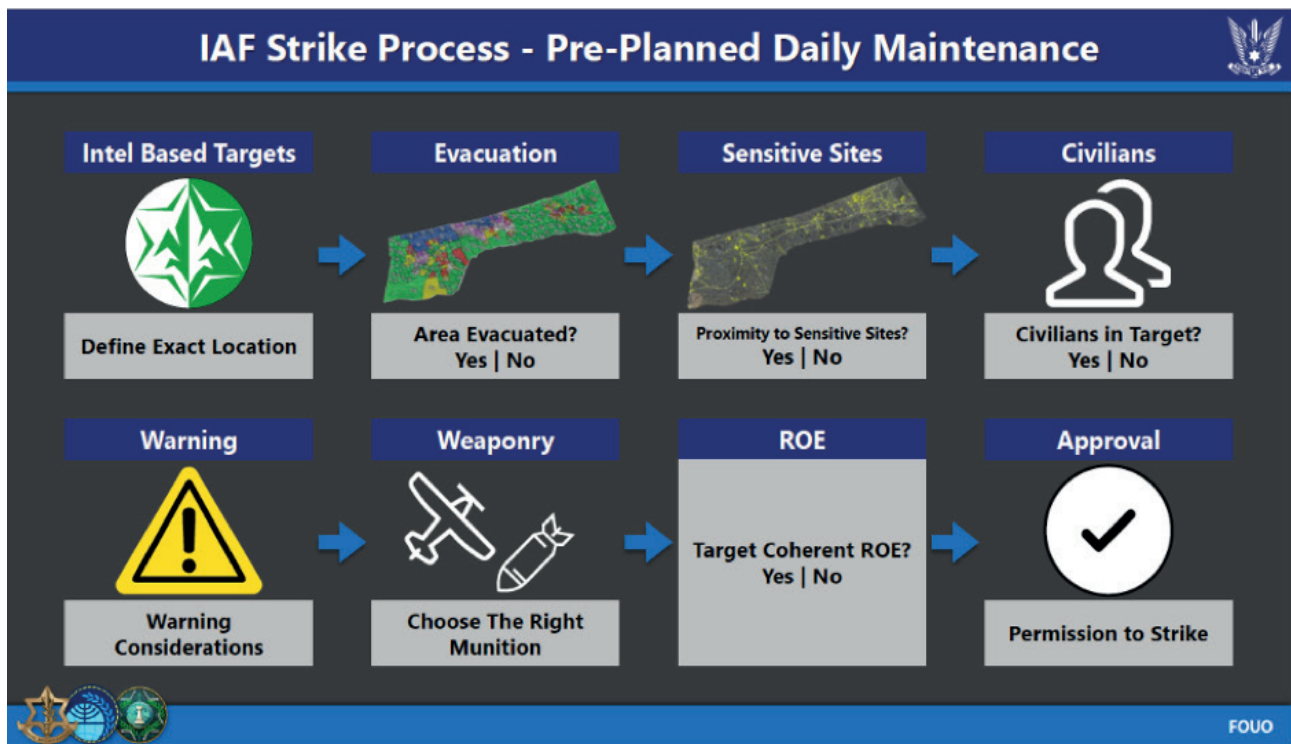
⁷² “Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949”, IHL Databases, 8 June 1977, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-37?activeTab=>.

⁷³ A detailed review of the LOAC regarding human shields can be found here: <https://international-review.icrc.org/articles/chained-cannons-or-wearing-targets-their-t-shirts-human-shields-international-humanitarian>.

⁷⁴ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-57>.

Targeting Process in the Context of Human Shields

To understand the challenges the IDF faces due to Hamas's human shield strategy, and how Israel navigates this deliberate effort to hinder the IDF's attempts to successfully target Hamas, it is essential to comprehend the IDF's targeting process. Similar to any Western army, the IDF's approach is driven by intelligence. Even reports that are highly critical of Israeli actions recognise that the IDF bases its targeting process on intelligence.⁷⁵ Major General Goldfuss, who was commanding the IDF's 98th Division in Gaza 2023-24, stated that IDF operations in Gaza had led to a "renaissance" in human intelligence sources, while also noting that the IDF employs AI for target generation.⁷⁶ However, a human remains in the intelligence loop to continue the planning process once suggested targets are identified. The overall targeting process is summarised in the graphic below:



IDF strike-planning process (Source: IDF)

Multiple and combined intelligence sources (e.g., air reconnaissance, human sources, signals intelligence) are used to generate a target pack. Data from the IDF's Civilian Harm Mitigation Cell (CHMC) is then used to establish the levels of civilian activity around the proposed strike site. Aerial surveillance will further observe the strike site prior to the launching of any munitions.

For years prior to the 7 October conflict, the IDF has established an operational CHMC. The CHMC's mission is outlined as follows: "CHMC temporarily relocates the population for their safety, prepares the operational area for combat, ensures freedom of action for military operations, and prevents a humanitarian crisis, all with the objective of enabling the IDF to defeat Hamas."⁷⁷

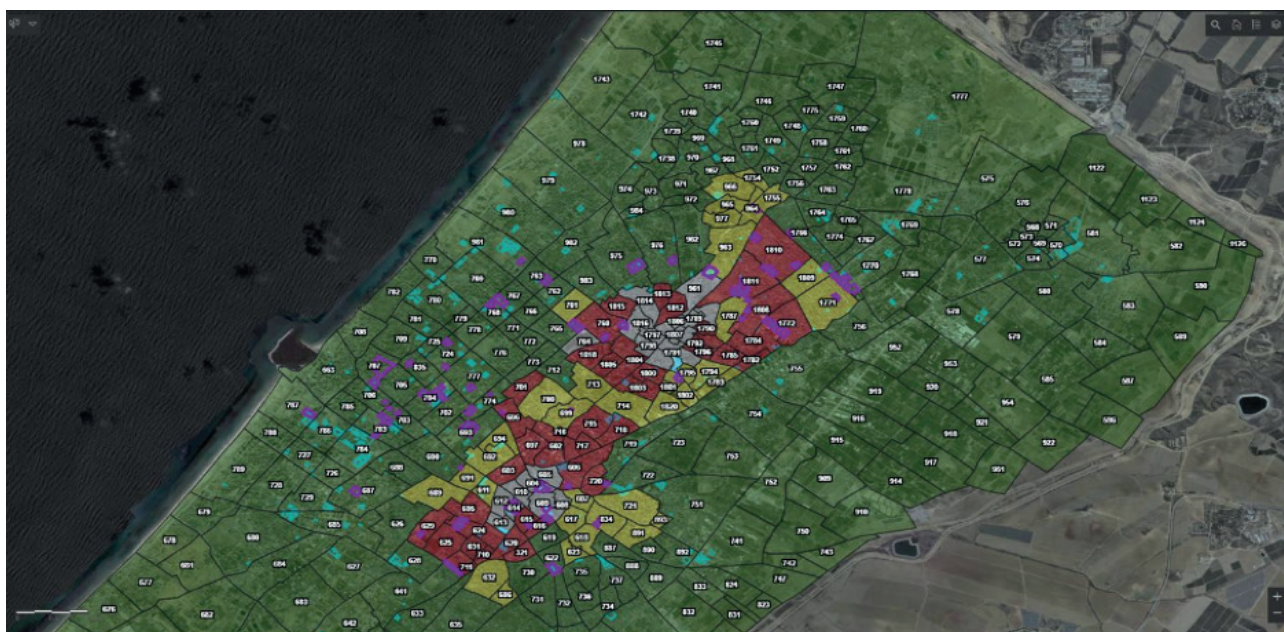
⁷⁵ Yuval Abraham, "'Lavender': The AI machine directing Israel's bombing spree in Gaza", *+972 Magazine*, 3 April 2024, <https://www.972mag.com/lavender-ai-israeli-army-gaza/>.

⁷⁶ Author's interview with Maj. Gen. Goldfuss, Tel Aviv, August 2024.

⁷⁷ Interview with the Commander of the Civilian Harm Mitigation Cell, Southern Command, July 2024.

The CHMC, as it operates in the current war, results from eight years of research and technological advancements by the IDF. It consists of a team of 25 officers and soldiers under the leadership of a Brigadier General (1-star). The team includes an open-source intelligence unit, a tactical team responsible for relaying data to battalions and brigades, Arabic linguists, a fires advisor, international humanitarian law experts, a liaison officer from the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, a data analysis unit and a geographic information team.

The CHMC produces a highly detailed and dynamic map of Gaza, updated hourly, divided into 620 cells aligned with Palestinian municipal areas. This map provides real-time population density data for each cell and can be examined individually for further information. It contains granular details, including strike histories and the current percentage of civilian presence compared to the original population. Real-time aerial photography verifies civilian activity and each cell can be analysed individually. The map is accessible to all IDF operational centres in both the Army and Air Force, but its content is centrally controlled by the CHMC.



Example product from the Civilian Harm Mitigation Cell, showing Gaza divided into cells showing population density against expected normal levels. (Source: IDF)

Additionally, drones are used to assess potential civilian casualties. Targets are monitored for at least an hour to understand the local pattern of life and minimise civilian harm. The IDF cancels strikes if the number of civilians present is deemed disproportionate to the target's military value. Israeli Air Force (IAF) planners have stated that one in every two planned air strikes in the Gaza conflict was cancelled.⁷⁸

Once the target is generated and possible collateral damage is assessed, the correct munition is selected. The nature of the target (e.g., a tunnel or a target of significant value) may require a 2000-pound bomb, while others may only need a smaller munition, such as a GBU-39 with a 250-pound warhead. Significant criticism has been directed at the IDF for using so-called “dumb bombs” but these munitions are accurate to within 50 metres when deployed by a “smart” modern aircraft operated by a “smart” pilot following proper targeting procedures.

In the next step of the process, IDF lawyers will assess compliance with the IDF Rules of Engagement before the strike is executed. This multi-step process is continually refined and, as

⁷⁸ Author's interview with IAF planners, Tel Aviv, July 2024.

of August 2024, was in its 62nd iteration.⁷⁹ This entire multi-step targeting process employed by the IDF was corroborated by General Sir John McColl, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe. He documented his assessment in *The Times* following his investigative visit to Israel in 2024, concluding: “[IDF] procedures are at least as rigorous as those applied in the UK armed forces”.⁸⁰

The IDF's targeting process is complicated by Hamas's use of human shields. Collateral damage is likely to be significantly higher when the enemy is concealed within protected locations and civilian infrastructure, as outlined in this report. The IDF has made efforts to reduce harm to civilians through humanitarian evacuations, phone calls and text messages, thereby sacrificing an element of surprise.

⁷⁹ Author's interview with IDF planners, Tel Aviv, August 2024.

⁸⁰ McColl, “I fought in Iraq”.

The Erasure of Hamas and the Human Shield Strategy in “Genocide” Reports

An analysis of key reports and court filings alleging that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza reveals a deliberate disregard for Hamas's use of human shields. These documents largely erase Hamas from the narrative, portraying the conflict as if Israel is targeting only defenceless civilians rather than engaging with a force of over 30,000 organised fighters that have rigged the landscape of Gaza for combat. This omission aims to frame every Israeli action in Gaza as inherently criminal. Below is a review of three reports claiming Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, all of which fail to address Hamas's human shield strategy.

The ICJ filing by South Africa

South Africa's 84-page legal filing against Israel, submitted to the International Court of Justice in December 2023, stands out for what it chooses to ignore.⁸¹ Nowhere does it acknowledge that Hamas is actively waging war against the IDF in Gaza. The word “tunnel” appears only three times, all in critical references to Israel: a 2009 UN document accusing Israel of using Palestinians as human shields to locate Hamas tunnels; a 2015 UN report attributing some destruction in Gaza to Israel's efforts to dismantle tunnels; and criticism of Israel's recent proposal to flood Gaza's tunnels. However, it fails to mention Hamas's extensive tunnel network beneath Gazan cities or its role in contributing to civilian casualties and destruction in Gaza. Rocket fire is mentioned only twice – once regarding the events of 7 October and another muted reference to ongoing rocket launches at Israel – but there is no acknowledgment of Hamas embedding rocket launchers within or near civilian infrastructure. The document entirely overlooks Hamas's broader military strategies and its use of civilian areas, attributing all blame for civilian casualties solely to Israel.

Amnesty Report

Amnesty International's 296-page report “You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza”, published in December 2024, offers only a superficial acknowledgment of the concept of human shields in its discussion of international law, dedicating just half a page to the topic.⁸² The report does not explore how Hamas systematically uses this tactic. Instead, it emphasises a statement from the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) which says:

In wartime conditions it is inevitable that individuals belonging to the category of combatants become intermingled with the civilian population, for example, soldiers on leave visiting their families. However, provided that these are not regular units with fairly large numbers, this does not in any way change the civilian character of a population.⁸³

This focus by Amnesty disregards Hamas's systematic and intentional use of human shields, falsely presenting the issue as incidental and related mainly to Hamas members visiting their families.

Amnesty avoids addressing critical aspects of Hamas's military strategy. For example, like the ICJ filing, it omits any discussion of Hamas's extensive tunnel network. The word “tunnel” appears solely in references to Israeli claims about targeting them. Discussing Israeli actions,

⁸¹ “Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip (South Africa v. Israel)”, ICJ, <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/192>.

⁸² “You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza”, Amnesty International, 5 December 2024, pp.78-79, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde15/8668/2024/en/>.

⁸³ Ibid., p.79.

Amnesty states: "While Israel has justified many of its attacks based on the existence of tunnels or the presence of Hamas members and other military objectives within residential neighbourhoods, Amnesty International found a pattern of direct attacks on civilians with no apparent military objective present..."⁸⁴ Amnesty fails to consider the role Hamas's tunnels play in contributing to civilian casualties.

In a short discussion on Hamas's presence in civilian areas, Amnesty frames the issue as an Israeli claim while stressing that, even if Hamas exploited civilian locations, Israel remains obligated to avoid indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks. The report states:

The existence of military objectives – including the eradication of Hamas – in no way undermines or belies the existence of genocidal intent. The Israeli authorities argue that their military forces lawfully targeted Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups throughout Gaza and that the resulting unprecedented destruction and denial of aid were the outcome of Hamas's co-location among Palestinian civilians and its diversion of aid, respectively. However, even where Hamas fighters were located near or within densely populated areas, Israel was obligated to take all feasible precautions to spare civilians and avoid attacks that would be indiscriminate or disproportionate.⁸⁵

While Amnesty correctly notes that Israel must adhere to the principles of distinction and proportionality regardless of Hamas's actions, it employs a strawman argument by downplaying the extent to which Hamas's tactics contribute to civilian casualties. By ignoring Hamas's deliberate use of human shields and other violations of international law, the report oversimplifies the conflict, failing to acknowledge that civilian deaths often result from Hamas's intentional embedding of military assets within civilian areas – even when the IDF follows the rules of war.

UN Report

On 20 September 2024, a UN special committee wrote a 27-page report, later presented to the UN General Assembly, titled "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territory".⁸⁶ The report concluded that "policies and practices of Israel during the reporting period are consistent with the characteristics of genocide."⁸⁷ Notably, the document makes no reference to Hamas's use of human shields, even as an Israeli claim. The word "tunnel" does not appear in the report and "rocket" is mentioned only in the context of Hamas's attack on 7 October, with no further discussion. Hamas is referenced just four times: twice in relation to 7 October, once citing an Israeli claim that a detained journalist was affiliated with Hamas and once quoting a former Israeli official about killing "more Hamas fighters". The report presents the conflict as though Hamas is completely absent, not a party to the war, and bears no responsibility for the suffering in Gaza.

⁸⁴ "You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza", Amnesty International, p.205.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.280.

⁸⁶ "UN Special Committee finds Israel's warfare methods in Gaza consistent with genocide", Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 14 November 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/un-special-committee-finds-israels-warfare-methods-gaza-consistent-genocide>.

⁸⁷ "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territory", UN, 20 September 2024, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/79/363>.

Ten Elements of Hamas's Human Shield Strategy

Hamas's human shield strategy encompasses ten categories of activities, each of which is identified and analysed in this report.

1. **Tunnel network.** Hamas's tunnel network is the centrepiece of the group's military doctrine and its primary strategy for using human shields. Hamas has constructed a vast, multi-layered city beneath the surface, widely estimated to be 500 kilometres in length. The network was intentionally built underneath all areas of civilian Gaza, with an average of 1.4 kilometres of tunnels for each square kilometre of territory. These tunnels serve various purposes: protecting Hamas's command centres and leadership; providing long-term shelter for fighters; enabling tactical combat manoeuvres against the IDF; facilitating transportation across Gaza; allowing fighters to approach the Israeli border undetected; and safeguarding locations for weapons manufacturing, computer servers and other strategic assets.
2. **Tunnel shafts.** Although shafts are an integral part of the tunnel network, they are considered a separate human shield strategy because they serve as ground-level access points to the tunnels. Hamas has constructed thousands of these shafts inside residential homes (including in children's bedrooms), schools, mosques and other civilian locations.
3. **Booby-traps.** Hamas has booby-trapped thousands of civilian buildings in Gaza, creating a deadly environment for IDF soldiers. These traps have proven highly effective and are among the leading causes of IDF casualties. Efforts to neutralise the booby-trap threat through airstrikes and ground-level attacks have significantly contributed to the widespread destruction in Gaza, likely resulting in civilian casualties.
4. **Civilian structures used for combat and weapons storage.** Hamas has exploited civilian buildings, including residential apartments, for both combat operations and weapons storage. The organisation has frequently engaged IDF soldiers from within Gazan homes, thereby putting the civilian population at risk. The group has stored a variety of weapons in civilian structures, such as homes, mosques, schools, UNRWA facilities and even beneath children's beds, for either long-term storage or active combat purposes. Operatives dressed in civilian clothing entered these armed positions to fire at IDF targets and then exited, blending back into the civilian population.
5. **Rockets stored and launched from civilian locations.** The indiscriminate firing of rockets at Israel has been one of Hamas's main tactics for nearly two decades. This war crime is further compounded by Hamas's positioning of thousands of rocket launchers and rockets in civilian areas across Gaza, including inside schools and mosques. These locations are selected to evade detection and complicate Israel's efforts to prevent rocket attacks.
6. **Hospitals used for military purposes.** Hamas has consistently used hospitals as command centres, locations for hiding operatives, combat positions and sites for hostage-taking. Despite ongoing efforts by critics of Israel to downplay or dismiss this tactic, Hamas's use of hospitals as part of its fundamental human shield strategy has been thoroughly documented and substantiated.
7. **Schools used for military purposes.** Hamas has consistently used schools to shelter operatives and establish command centres. This practice increased in the latter half of the Gaza war as the IDF destroyed key tunnels, forcing Hamas to relocate its command centres. The exploitation of schools, one of the most cynical aspects of the human shield strategy, is well documented.

8. **Humanitarian zones used for military purposes.** Hamas has consistently used humanitarian zones to establish command centres, launch rockets and store weapons. This misuse of humanitarian zones escalated as the conflict progressed as Hamas's infrastructure faced increasing destruction and civilians sought refuge in these areas. Notably, IDF forces killed Hamas military commander Mohamed Deif while he was attending a meeting in the Mawasi humanitarian zone.
9. **Hamas's policy of dressing in civilian clothes.** Hamas aims to confuse IDF operations by disguising its operatives as civilians and portraying all casualties in Gaza as non-combatants. The group frequently films itself engaging in combat while wearing civilian clothing. After the 2025 ceasefire, members of Hamas notably appeared in Gaza once again in full military uniform.
10. **Hamas's ruses of war and other human shield tactics.** Hamas has employed various strategies that deliberately blur the distinction between civilians and combatants. These include booby-trapping toys, using children as combatants and lookouts, commandeering aid and preventing civilians from evacuating expected combat zones.

The next sections document the use of Hamas's human shield strategy across the ten categories. This report relies on a wide range of sources to verify Hamas's action:

- Independent media reports. HJS reviewed many independent investigations by leading worldwide media outlets, such as *The New York Times* and *The Telegraph*.
- Throughout the war, Israel and the IDF have released thousands of videos and photographs documenting combat operations in Gaza and the full scope of Hamas's human shield strategy. Much of this documentation is available on the IDF's Telegram channel, in X posts from official Israeli accounts and on other platforms. The authors of this report have reviewed a substantial portion of the IDF's materials, presenting only a small selection of the highest quality videos and images, where Hamas's use of civilian structures is clearly visible. The report does not include the hundreds of still photographs the IDF has released showing weapons found in schools, homes, mosques and other civilian sites, nor the black and white aerial drone footage of airstrikes.
- Videos and statements released by Hamas officials and operatives often serve as propaganda.⁸⁸ The videos presented in this report were recovered by the IDF from captured or eliminated operatives. This report does not consider the numerous interrogations of captured Hamas operatives published by the IDF, many of whom admit to employing human shield tactics such as using hospitals for combat and command purposes.
- Intelligence information and statements from officials in the US, UK and EU countries.

⁸⁸ Propaganda videos issued by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in Gaza have been sourced from pro-Palestinian websites and journalists, such as from Electronic Intifada.

1. Tunnel Network

Hamas's tunnel network serves as the central element of the group's military doctrine in Gaza and is the most apparent manifestation of its human shield strategy. There is widespread recognition that Hamas has constructed an extensive, multi-layered tunnel system spanning several hundred kilometres beneath all areas of Gaza, including densely populated urban neighbourhoods, thus utilising the civilian infrastructure above to shield itself from IDF attacks. Hamas admits that it employs the tunnels to conceal its military assets. For instance, senior Hamas official Ali Baraka stated to *The Washington Post* in November 2023 that "the fighters are underground, waiting for the battle".⁸⁹

A detailed investigative report in *The New York Times*, titled "The Tunnels of Gaza" and published in November 2023, explains how Hamas's tunnels are "snaking beneath dense residential areas".⁹⁰ The article describes the various types of tunnels built by Hamas and how they are believed to "extend across most if not all of Gaza". The report shows illustrations of tunnels located dozens of metres below residential buildings. Another investigative report in *The New York Times*, from July 2024, explained how Hamas had expanded the tunnel network for several years prior to 7 October, using the civilian infrastructure above to shield the network. The report explains: "The tunnel network grew so extensive that it ran underneath a major U.N. compound and the largest hospital in Gaza, as well as major roads, countless homes and government buildings."⁹¹

In February 2024, journalists from *The Wall Street Journal* explored an extensive tunnel network in Khan Younis that once housed senior Hamas members and Israeli hostages.⁹² The network included kitchens, sleeping quarters, bathrooms and a metal-barred gate to convert a room into a cell for hostages. Capturing the area required intense fighting by the IDF, resulting in the destruction of the surrounding block. As recounted in the article, an IDF commander explained that Hamas had defended the tunnel with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), rifle fire and explosives aimed at Israeli tanks.

An investigative report published by Reuters in December 2023, "Inside the tunnels of Gaza", describes the vast network of tunnels as "a warren of interconnecting passages that stretches below Gaza's streets, extending for hundreds of miles into almost every area of the enclave" with entrance shafts "hidden among what remains of the city's multi-storey buildings".⁹³ The journalists consulted seven military experts who described how Hamas built the tunnel network and displayed diagrams of tunnels under Gaza's civilian infrastructure.

Sky News correspondent Nicole Johnston recounted her visit in December 2023 to a massive tunnel inside Gaza near the Erez Crossing, which is used to bring humanitarian aid into Gaza. Johnston explained that she had visited the "underground networks at the bottom of Gaza over the years... The problem is the tunnels are embedded in the Gaza strip... the network runs deep below homes, schools and neighborhoods."⁹⁴

⁸⁹ William Booth and Ilan Ben Zion, "How Gaza's tunnel network leaves Israel facing 'three-dimensional' war", *The Washington Post*, 3 November 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/11/03/gaza-tunnels-hamas-israel-war/>.

⁹⁰ Marco Hernandez and Josh Holder, "The Tunnels of Gaza", *The New York Times*, 10 November 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/11/10/world/europe/hamas-gaza-tunnels.html>.

⁹¹ Patrick Kingsley, et al., "How Hamas Is Fighting in Gaza: Tunnels, Traps and Ambushes", *The New York Times*, 13 July 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/13/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-fighting.html>.

⁹² Dov Lieber, "Inside the Hamas Tunnels That Conceal Militant Leaders and Israeli Hostages", *The Wall Street Journal*, 7 February 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-tunnels-gaza-israel-hostages-ebc0cb4d>.

⁹³ Adolfo Arranz, et al., "Inside the tunnels of Gaza", *Reuters*, 31 December 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ISRAEL-PALESTINIANS/GAZA-TUNNELS/gkvlmzovrb/>.

⁹⁴ Nicole Johnston, "IDF shows media a Hamas tunnel, where holes drop several metres deeper to other parts of the network", *Sky News*, 27 December 2023, <https://news.sky.com/story/idf-shows-media-a-hamas-tunnel-where-holes-drop-several-metres-deeper-to-other-parts-of-the-network-13038167>.

In January 2024, journalists from ABC News were invited inside Gaza to visit several tunnels uncovered by the IDF. The reporter explained how his team saw “part of a tunnel in the heart of Gaza City”.⁹⁵ The report notes that the team visited four separate tunnels in Gaza, including one tunnel surrounded by civilian buildings in Khan Younis.

Few Gazans are willing to discuss or disclose Hamas's human shield strategy for fear of reprisals. However, author and former Gazan resident Jihad al-Saftawi has recounted how Hamas built a tunnel under his family home and explained how it was used to store weapons. The construction occurred at night. Al-Saftawi laments how Hamas “began destroying my family home in 2013 when they built tunnels beneath it.”⁹⁶

Numerous well-documented examples show Hamas tunnels existing beneath protected civilian locations in Gaza, as provided by the IDF and verified by international journalists. A tunnel over 200 metres long beneath the grounds of Shifa Hospital was disclosed by the IDF in detailed videos and confirmed in a *New York Times* investigative piece published in February 2024.⁹⁷

In February 2024, Israel uncovered a tunnel network beneath the Gaza headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and a nearby UNRWA school. The IDF released several detailed videos and images of the tunnels and shafts within these UNRWA buildings, including underground Hamas server rooms powered by facilities above.⁹⁸ Journalists were invited to inspect the tunnels and the surrounding area, confirming the IDF's findings. For example, a video report published by AP shows the interior of the tunnels and the UNRWA building above (see still image from video below).⁹⁹ Journalists from *The Wall Street Journal* also visited the location and verified the tunnel complex, “which snaked for about a half-mile beneath U.N. and other buildings in the area.”¹⁰⁰ The reporters described in detail the various rooms they observed in the tunnel complex, including computer servers. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini did not deny the presence of the tunnel under its Gaza building but claimed UNRWA “did not know” and called for an independent inquiry.¹⁰¹ UN Secretary-General António Guterres denied that UNRWA provided support to Hamas but readily admitted that a tunnel ran underneath the UNRWA building and elsewhere in Gaza in comments made to CNN: “Of course there are tunnels below the premises of UNRWA, as there are tunnels everywhere in Gaza.”¹⁰²

The IDF has released detailed maps, images and extensive video footage of many Hamas tunnels that have been located and destroyed in the current war, covering dozens of kilometres. A significant number of these tunnels have been found underneath densely populated civilian neighbourhoods in Gaza.

For example, in December 2023, the IDF released detailed video footage and images of a tunnel and shafts located in the heart of a residential area in Gaza City known as the Elite Quarter. A

⁹⁵ Matt Gutman, “Inside the tunnels of Gaza”, *YouTube* video, posted by *ABC News*, 30 January 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FACrMHbC1c8>.

⁹⁶ al-Saftawi, “Hamas Built Tunnels Beneath My Family's Home in Gaza”.

⁹⁷ Matthew Rosenberg, et al., “A Tunnel Offers Clues to How Hamas Uses Gaza's Hospitals”, *The New York Times*, 12 February 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/02/12/world/middleeast/gaza-tunnel-israel-hamas.html>.

⁹⁸ “Inside UNRWA Facilities: Weapons and Underground Hamas Intelligence Asset”, IDF, 10 February 2024, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/february-24-pr/inside-unrwa-facilities-weapons-and-underground-hamas-intelligence-asset/>.

⁹⁹ *Associated Press*, “Israel shows tunnels under Gaza headquarters of UN agency for Palestinian refugees”, *YouTube* video, 1 January 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTSqgb0h8eA>.

¹⁰⁰ Dov Lieber and David Luhnow, “Hamas Military Compound Found Beneath U.N. Agency Headquarters in Gaza”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 10 February 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-military-compound-found-beneath-u-n-agency-headquarters-in-gaza-7e29c758>.

¹⁰¹ Philippe Lazzarini (@UNLazzarini), Xpost, 10 February 2024, 6:01pm, <https://x.com/UNLazzarini/status/1756377920254218556>.

¹⁰² Fareed Zakaria, “GPS Extra: UN Secretary General hits back at UNRWA allegations”, *CNN World*, 22 September 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/09/22/world/video/gps0922-guterres-on-unrwa-allegations>.



deep shaft and tunnel are shown originating from the home of a senior aide to Yahya Sinwar, with another entrance from a residential structure.¹⁰³ The destruction of the tunnel network is depicted in an aerial video (see still image below), illustrating how the network was embedded in the midst of dense civilian areas.¹⁰⁴



Refer to Annex A for additional evidence of tunnels constructed beneath civilian areas of Gaza.

It is clear that Hamas has constructed an extensive tunnel network beneath civilian structures, effectively merging military and civilian zones. The next section presents evidence that entry shafts into these tunnels are often located within homes, hospitals and even children's bedrooms. This integration complicates adherence to the LOAC principle of distinction, which requires parties to direct attacks solely at military targets.

¹⁰³ Israel Defense Forces, "IDF neutralizes armed terrorist approaching security fence in southern Gaza", *Telegram*, 20 December 2023, <https://t.me/idfofficial/6034>; "IDF operational footage: Neutralization of terrorist near security fence", Israel Defense Forces, <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/29e6aa56-5d2d-4557-a646-ae665bb89b03>.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

2. Tunnel Shafts

Complementary to the 500-kilometre tunnel network are thousands of tunnel shafts that provide access to the tunnels from various locations throughout Gaza. Hamas has strategically located the shafts within civilian structures, including homes, mosques and schools. A *New York Times* article from January 2024, discussing the extent of the tunnel network, cited Israeli defence officials who estimate that there are nearly 5700 separate shafts leading to the underground system.¹⁰⁵ Journalists visited three tunnel shafts in central Gaza: one inside a single-storey farm building surrounded by farmland and two within civilian steelworks buildings, one of which descends about 27 metres and is equipped with an elevator. These shafts are a key component of Hamas's combat strategy, enabling fighters to emerge unexpectedly from concealed shafts, ambush Israeli forces and then swiftly return underground. Many tunnel shafts have been booby-trapped by Hamas, resulting in significant IDF casualties. The threat posed by thousands of these shafts has led to the demolition of numerous civilian structures and collateral damage as Israeli forces conducted airstrikes on the tunnel and shaft network.

Many independent journalists and investigative reports verify the use of civilian structures by Hamas to conceal tunnel shafts, thus confirming this human shield tactic. A detailed investigative report published by *The New York Times* in November 2023 stated that tunnel shafts "are often hidden in the basements of civilian buildings".¹⁰⁶ In February 2024, a journalist from *The Wall Street Journal* visited a massive tunnel network in Khan Younis that at one point housed senior Hamas members; the reporter noted that an access shaft to this tunnel originated from an unassuming family home above.¹⁰⁷ A tunnel more than 200 metres long found beneath Shifa Hospital, verified and mapped out in a *New York Times* article, revealed a tunnel shaft leading from the grounds of the hospital.¹⁰⁸ A July 2024 investigative report by *The New York Times*, referencing earlier findings, explained that since 2021, Hamas had "expanded a vast network of tunnels, creating entry points in houses across Gaza that would allow fighters to enter and exit without being seen from the air but made targets of civilian neighborhoods."¹⁰⁹

The IDF has released dozens of videos and photographs showing tunnel shafts uncovered inside and near civilian structures such as mosques, playgrounds and homes. One of the most notable examples, due to the presence of Israeli hostages who had been executed by Hamas, was discovered in September 2023. The IDF revealed detailed footage and images of a 20-metre-deep tunnel and entrance shaft where six hostages were found murdered.¹¹⁰ The images clearly show the shaft originating in a child's bedroom, with Disney characters painted on the walls (see image below). Reporter Alistair Bunkall of the UK's *Sky News* was allowed to examine the Rafah area and this tunnel shaft, verifying the IDF-provided evidence. His video report shows additional footage of the shaft and the bedroom. Bunkall explains: "The six Israeli hostages murdered two weeks ago were found in this tunnel. The entry shaft was under a child's bedroom painted with Disney figures. It joins a vast underground network tens of kilometres long."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ Adam Goldman, et al., "Israel Unearths More of a Subterranean Fortress Under Gaza", *The New York Times*, 16 January 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/16/us/politics/israel-gaza-tunnels.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Hernandez and Holder, "The Tunnels of Gaza".

¹⁰⁷ Lieber, "Inside the Hamas Tunnels That Conceal Militant Leaders and Israeli Hostages".

¹⁰⁸ Rosenberg, et al., "A Tunnel Offers Clues to How Hamas Uses Gaza's Hospitals".

¹⁰⁹ Kingsley, et al., "How Hamas Is Fighting in Gaza: Tunnels, Traps and Ambushes".

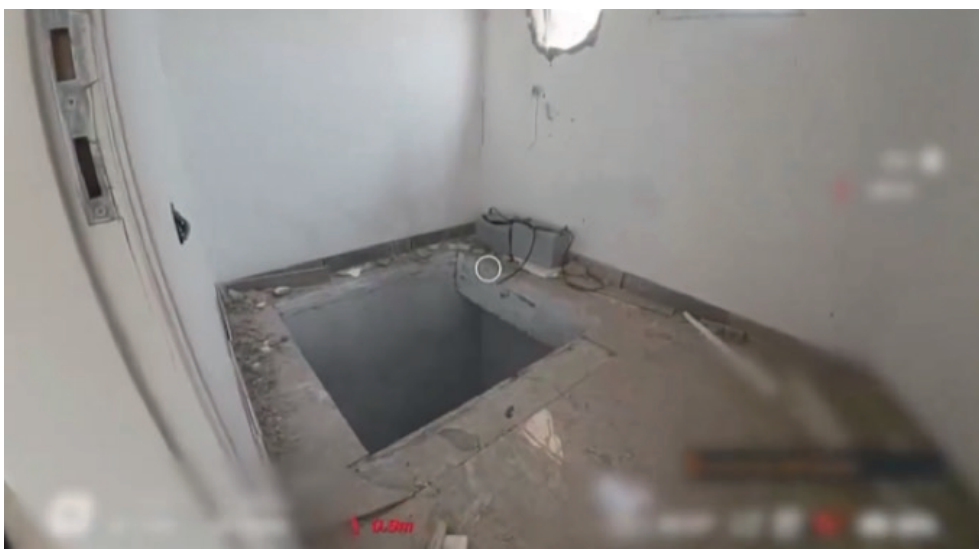
¹¹⁰ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 10 September 2024, 6:24pm, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1833557217913471348>; Israel (@Israel), X post, 5 September 2024, 4:21am, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1831533088486129923>.

¹¹¹ Alistair Bunkall, "Sky News enters 'flattened' Rafah, witnessing tunnels under kid's bedrooms", *YouTube* video, posted by *Sky News*, 14 September 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQEHw3MIDck>.



The IDF has released many detailed images and uncut video footage of tunnel shafts located in civilian structures. For example, in December 2023, it released uncut drone footage beginning outside a mosque in Gaza, then entering inside, moving through several rooms to reveal a tunnel shaft. This is among the clearest pieces of evidence of how mosques are connected to the Hamas tunnel network. See the still image below.¹¹²

Refer to Annex A for additional evidence of tunnel shafts built inside civilian homes and other structures in Gaza.



¹¹² Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 28 December 2023, 3:08pm, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1740389313802535209>.

3. Booby-Traps

The booby-trapping of thousands of structures in Gaza is one of the primary tactics employed by Hamas to confront IDF forces, representing Hamas's exploitation of Gaza's civilian infrastructure for military purposes. Hamas understands that using explosives and improvised explosive devices on roads, against buildings and within structures is one of the most effective means of inflicting harm on IDF soldiers.

Indeed, many hundreds of IDF troops have been killed or wounded by booby-traps. For instance, in September 2024, four IDF soldiers were killed while entering a booby-trapped building in the Tel Sultan neighbourhood of Rafah.¹¹³ In October 2024, Col. Ehsan Daxa, the commander of the IDF's 401 Armored Brigade, was killed by a booby-trap in the Jabalia neighbourhood, marking the highest-ranking soldier killed so far in Gaza.¹¹⁴

The large-scale booby-trapping of civilian structures in Gaza has caused widespread destruction in the territory and has certainly resulted in civilian casualties, although no data is available on this. Given the significant threat posed by booby-traps, the IDF has conducted airstrikes and other pre-emptive attacks on booby-trapped locations. In some instances, the IDF has positioned explosive armoured personnel carriers in the centre of streets to trigger booby-traps in an area.¹¹⁵ The extent of the booby-trapping is vast; according to a report by Amir Bohbot, an Israeli military journalist for *Walla*, 95,000 structures in Gaza have been booby-trapped, with 14,000 in Rafah alone.¹¹⁶ The IDF reported that during the months-long delay in entering Rafah in the spring of 2024, Hamas rigged thousands of buildings to explode, often in interconnected chains of more than 30 buildings. During the IDF's late-2024 operations against Hamas in the Jabalia area, which Israel had entered several times earlier in the war, the IDF recorded 606 buildings in the neighbourhood as newly booby-trapped.¹¹⁷

An investigative report in *The New York Times* from October 2024, titled "Hamis's Guerrilla Tactics in North Gaza Make It Hard to Defeat", described the widespread rigging of buildings with explosives: "The fighters emerge briefly in small units to booby trap buildings, set roadside bombs, attach mines to Israeli armored vehicles or fire rocket-propelled grenades at Israeli forces before attempting to return underground."¹¹⁸

Hamis and other militant groups have released numerous propaganda videos boasting of booby-trapping activities taking place within civilian buildings and at roadsides. The operatives are always dressed in civilian clothes and typically appear unarmed. If killed by the IDF, they can be presented by local health authorities as unarmed civilians. Below are several examples of still images from the videos.¹¹⁹ In one image, an operative is rigging an explosive that is hidden inside a dresser in a civilian apartment in Jabalia.

¹¹³ Emanuel Fabian, "4 IDF troops killed, several hurt during fighting in southern Gaza's Rafah", *The Times of Israel*, 18 September 2024, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/4-idf-troops-killed-several-hurt-during-fighting-in-southern-gaza-rafah/>.

¹¹⁴ Jotam Confino, "Colonel killed by booby trap is highest ranking IDF officer to die in Gaza", *The Telegraph*, 21 October 2024, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/10/21/colonel-booby-trap-highest-ranking-idf-officer-die-gaza/>.

¹¹⁵ Yoav Zitun and Einav Halabi, "How IDF uses explosive-laden APCs to clear booby-trapped areas in Gaza", *Ynetnews*, 27 December 2024, <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/rkt16f3hje>.

¹¹⁶ https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1836314244049977773.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.jewishpress.com/special-features/israel-at-war-iron-swords/162nd-armored-division-killed-196-terrorists-detained-250-in-less-than-2-hours/2024/12/31/>.

¹¹⁸ Patrick Kingsley and Aaron Boxerman, "Hamis's Guerrilla Tactics in North Gaza Make It Hard to Defeat", *The New York Times*, 22 October 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/22/world/middleeast/hamis-israel-gaza-guerrilla.html>.

¹¹⁹ Jon Elmer (@jonelmer), X post, 29 October 2024, 8:36pm, <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1851362424072400943>; Jon Elmer (@jonelmer), X post, 13 August 2024, 6:34pm, <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1823412834937790671>.



The IDF has released numerous videos and images that demonstrate the widespread rigging of civilian homes and other structures in Gaza with explosives. Some of the videos were captured by IDF drones prior to entering apartments, while others were recorded by Hamas operatives using their body cameras. For instance, in June 2024, the IDF published unedited drone footage showing large barrel explosives planted by Hamas inside a civilian apartment in Rafah. The explosive, as depicted in the still image below, was located in the kitchen area.¹²⁰



Refer to Annex A for further evidence of booby-traps placed by Hamas in civilian structures in Gaza.

Following the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, finalised in January 2025, Hamas's Government Media Office released a press statement on 14 January 2025, available on the agency's Telegram page. This statement acknowledges the significant danger of booby-trapped buildings to the Palestinian residents of Gaza.¹²¹ The initial comment in the press release warns Gazan residents to be cautious of ambushes and booby-trapped properties while moving throughout the territory. Hamas claims that the "occupation", referring to Israel, is responsible for these booby-traps. However, no credible reports suggest that the IDF has acted in this manner. We assess that this press release represents an admission by Hamas regarding the booby-trap strategy, which has now become a significant threat to Gazan civilians returning to their homes and workplaces.

¹²⁰ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 1 June 2024, 7:28pm, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1796972140765348346>.

¹²¹ Government Press Office, "Official Statement from the Government Press Office", *Telegram*, 2024, <https://t.me/mediagovps/3416>.

4. Civilian Structures Used for Combat and Weapons Storage

Hamas employs a core battle strategy of pre-positioning weapons, ranging from small arms to RPGs, within civilian buildings for operatives to access during anticipated confrontations with IDF forces. This strategy is part of the 360-degree urban warfare landscape that Hamas believes would enable its members to inflict a high level of casualties on IDF troops, potentially forcing the Israeli military to withdraw. Hamas operatives in combat always dress as civilians, avoid openly carrying weapons that might identify them as combatants and retrieve stored arms upon entering buildings to engage in combat. Afterward, they exit the building and resume their appearance as civilians. A *New York Times* investigative report from July 2024 confirmed these tactics:

They hide under residential neighborhoods, storing their weapons in miles of tunnels and in houses, mosques, sofas – even a child's bedroom – blurring the boundary between civilians and combatants. They emerge from hiding in plainclothes, sometimes wearing sandals or tracksuits before firing on Israeli troops, attaching mines to their vehicles, or firing rockets from launchers in civilian areas... Using civilian homes and infrastructure – including medical facilities, U.N. offices and mosques – to conceal fighters, tunnel entrances, booby-traps and ammunition stores.¹²²

Hamas has admitted to the specific use of civilian bedrooms to hide weapons. *The New York Times* investigation discussed this strategy with senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk who “dismissed criticism of Hamas’s use of civilian attire and storage of weapons inside civilian homes, saying that it deflected attention away from Israeli wrongdoing.” Marzouk explained: “If there’s someone who takes a weapon from under a bed, is that a justification for killing 100,000 people? If someone takes a weapon from under a bed, is that justification to kill an entire school and destroy a hospital?”¹²³ Marzouk believes that Hamas’s use of civilian infrastructure to hide weapons and fighters should confer immunity to these locations. The article cites other Hamas members who defend their use of civilian clothes and homes, claiming that they “had no alternative”. Of course, Hamas does have an alternative, which is to fight in uniform and not engage in combat from within civilian structures; but it knows that this would make it much easier for the IDF to identify them and limit civilian harm, which would also mean that the international community would be less critical of Israel’s actions in Gaza.

The use of civilian buildings to store weapons has been documented well before 7 October. In July 2014, UNRWA acknowledged that its schools were used by Hamas for weapons storage. A press release it issued stated that “A cache of rockets was found earlier today at an UNRWA school in central Gaza.” UNRWA’s spokesperson at the time, Chris Gunness, condemned “the group or groups who endangered civilians by placing these munitions in our school.”¹²⁴ This marked the third time that UNRWA documented the use of schools for weapons storage during Operation Protective Edge.¹²⁵ During the same conflict in 2014, a *Washington Post* reporter noted that he had witnessed a group of men moving rockets into a mosque.¹²⁶

¹²² Kingsley, et al., “How Hamas Is Fighting in Gaza: Tunnels, Traps and Ambushes”.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ “Cache of rockets found in UN school in Gaza”, UNRWA, 29 July 2014, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/cache-rockets-found-un-school-gaza>.

¹²⁵ Operation Protective Edge, July–August 2014, an Israeli military campaign in Gaza aimed at stopping rocket fire and destroying Hamas’s tunnel infrastructure. “UNRWA condemns placement of rockets, for a second time, in one of its schools”, UNRWA, 22 July 2014, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-condemns-placement-rockets-second-time-one-its-schools>; Raphael Ahren, “For second time, rockets found at UN school in Gaza”, *The Times of Israel*, 22 July 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/for-second-time-rockets-found-at-un-school-in-gaza/>.

¹²⁶ William Booth, Sudarsan Raghavan and Ruth Eglash, “Israel launches ground invasion of Gaza”, *The Washington Post*, 17 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gaza-residents-scramble-to-make-most-of-five-hour-truce/2014/07/17/e5485fce-0d7e-11e4-8341-b8072b1e7348_story.html.

Hamas and other militant groups have released dozens of propaganda videos, many of them showing their fighters battling in civilian clothes from within residential apartment buildings. Below are several examples of still photographs from these videos. In one video, the operatives break a hole in a wall inside an apartment to create an opening for their rifles (as seen later in the same video), a tactic seen in other videos Hamas has released.¹²⁷



¹²⁷ Jon Elmer (@jonelmer, X posts, July, October and December 2024: <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1867026856333152474>; <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1864512952486756531>; <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1849477789205885072>; <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1810719036965109778>.



The IDF has released numerous images and videos of weapons found inside civilian buildings and Hamas combatants actively firing from apartments. In November 2023, the IDF released footage showing rockets stored inside a compartment of a child's bed in an apartment in the Beit Hanoun area (see still image below). This image aligns with a statement by Hamas leader Abu Marzouk, who openly admitted to using beds for weapons storage.¹²⁸



In addition to weapons storage and combat, the use of civilian homes to hold Israeli hostages has also been confirmed, representing another form of Hamas's exploitation of civilian locations for military purposes. *The Wall Street Journal* documented how Dr Ahmad Al-Jamal and his family held three Israeli hostages in their apartment in a residential building in Nuseirat.¹²⁹ One family member who lived in the apartment and assisted with the captivity of the hostages was Palestinian journalist Abdullah Al-Jamal, who is listed as one of Al-Jazeera's reporters.¹³⁰ The article also describes how Israeli hostage Noa Argamani was held by the Abu Nar family in their residential apartment a few blocks away. Furthermore, it notes that residents expressed

¹²⁸ "Terror organizations continue with their cynical use of children as a cover for terror", *Israel at War*, 16 November 2023, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/terror-organizations-continue-with-their-cynical-use-of-children-as-a-cover-for-terror/>; Adam Rasgon and Aaron Boxerman, "Muhammad Deif, a Top Hamas Commander, Is Dead, Israel Says", *The New York Times*, 1 August, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/13/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-fighting.html>.

¹²⁹ Abeer Ayyoub, "The Hostages Next Door: Inside a Notable Gaza Family's Dark Secret", *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 June 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/the-hostages-next-door-inside-a-notable-gaza-family-dark-secret-2896f6aa>.

¹³⁰ Abdullah Aljamal, *Al Jazeera*, https://www.aljazeera.com/author/abdallah_aljamal_190122103235277.

anger over Hamas using their residential neighbourhood as a human shield, which resulted in many casualties during the IDF's rescue operation and subsequent attacks by local fighters on withdrawing IDF forces. Some residents were "furious that Hamas had put civilians in danger". One Gazan remarked, "Hamas should give us a map of the safe zones we can stay in, because if we knew there were hostages in the neighborhood, we would have looked for another place."¹³¹

¹³¹ Abeer Ayyoub, "The Hostages Next Door: Inside a Notable Gaza Family's Dark Secret", *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 June 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/the-hostages-next-door-inside-a-notable-gaza-family-dark-secret-2896f6aa>.

5. Rockets Stored and Launched from Civilian Locations

Hamas has been firing rockets indiscriminately at Israeli residential areas for nearly two decades. These attacks could not be halted without aggressive ground action against Hamas, which is why Israel developed the Iron Dome system to counter the threat. After 7 October, with a major ground operation against Hamas unavoidable, Israel was finally able to nearly eliminate rocket fire coming from Gaza. It is indisputable that Hamas has embedded its rocket infrastructure within civilian locations and has launched rockets from within and near civilian sites. The 2019 NATO report describing Hamas's human shield strategy concluded as much:

The use of civilians as human shields is also manifested in Hamas' offensive strategy, especially when launching rockets and mortar shells at Israeli population centres. Small groups of combatants find positions near or within residential areas and facilities, from which they launch their attacks. The groups and their launchers are therefore camouflaged, while protecting them from potential Israeli retaliation.¹³²

Reporters inside Gaza have historically remained silent about Hamas's human shield tactics. On several occasions, this silence has been broken, such as in 2014 when a reporter from the Finnish television channel Helsingin Sanomat said during a live feed from Shifa Hospital that "right in the back parking lot of the hospital a rocket was launched, two o'clock in the morning, really, it happened right in the area, the sound of it was really loud, it's true that rockets are launched here from the Gaza side into Israel."¹³³

In July 2014, Italian journalist Gabriele Barbatì reported on a misfired Hamas rocket that fell inside Gaza and killed children. She added that militants rushed to the area and cleared debris.¹³⁴ In August 2014, France 24 journalist Gallagher Fenwick was on live television when a rocket was fired right next to his position, which he added was adjacent to a hotel and "right next to a UN facility". Fenwick confirmed the rocket was fired from "within densely populated civilian areas".¹³⁵ In the same month, an Indian journalist from NDTV posted a 4:24 minute video report (see still image overleaf) showing Hamas operatives setting up a rocket launch site and shortly after launching the rocket just metres from a hotel and other civilian buildings. The Indian journalist noted that his report would have "serious security consequences" for the crew and, indeed, the report was only filed after the crew safely exited Gaza.¹³⁶

In November 2023, Dutch journalist Jan Franke wrote a thread on X, primarily recounting how Hamas exploited the Shifa hospital (see details below in the section on hospitals). Franke also commented on the subject of rockets, recalling how in 2014, Hamas fighters launched rockets next to the Rimal Hotel in the "safe coastal" area because Hamas knew that the IDF would not bomb that location.¹³⁷

The firing of rockets from civilian locations in Gaza was acknowledged by the UN during an inquiry into the discovery of rockets and weaponry at an UNRWA school in 2014. UNRWA

¹³² James Pamment, et al., "Hamas' use of human shields in Gaza", p.161.

¹³³ "Helsingin Sanomat correspondent admits hamas launched rockets from shifa hospital", *YouTube* video, posted by emet forall, 1 August 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmQpiUvS2PQ>.

¹³⁴ gabrielebarbati (@gabrielebarbati), X posts, 29 July 2014, 3:46pm, <https://x.com/gabrielebarbati/status/494131918732926976> and 29 July 2014, 3:47pm, <https://x.com/gabrielebarbati/status/494132184257527808>.

¹³⁵ "Watch: More Evidence Hamas Hiding Behind Civilians", *Israel National News*, 5 August 2014, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/183759>.

¹³⁶ Ari Soffer, "Indian TV Exposes Hamas Use of Human Shields", *Israel National News*, 5 August 2014, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/183750>.

¹³⁷ Jan Franke (@Franke_schrijft), X post, 16 November 2023, 6:45am https://x.com/Franke_schrijft/status/1725037285249306726.



confirmed the presence of weaponry at the Jabalia Elementary “C” School in July 2014. After reviewing evidence of rockets fired at Israel, the inquiry concluded “it was highly likely” that the school premises were used to launch these attacks on Israel.¹³⁸

A July 2024 investigative report published in *The New York Times* on Hamas’s battle tactics in the 7 October war confirmed that Hamas was “firing rockets from launchers in civilian areas”.¹³⁹ The IDF has also documented many rocket launches and attacks emanating within and near civilian locations since 7 October. For example, in November 2023, the IDF released video footage showing a large rocket array located inside a youth centre in Gaza (see still image below).



Refer to Annex A for additional evidence of rockets stored and launched from civilian structures and areas of Gaza.

¹³⁸ “Letter dated 27 April 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council”, United Nations Security Council, para.70, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_286.pdf.

¹³⁹ Kingsley, et al., “How Hamas Is Fighting in Gaza: Tunnels, Traps and Ambushes”.

6. Hospitals Used for Military Purposes

Overview and Shifa Hospital

The exploitation of hospitals by Hamas was well documented before 7 October, particularly at the largest facility in Gaza, Shifa Hospital, which was broadly known to be used by Hamas for military activities. In November 2023, Dave Harden, the former USAID mission director in the West Bank and Gaza and a senior humanitarian assistance official in the Obama Administration, commented on his prior experience at the Shifa Hospital. He wrote in an X post that it was “broadly suspected/understood as far back as 2014 that Hamas used the Al Shifa Hospital complex as a command center and base for operations.”¹⁴⁰ He added that “Hamas used ambulances to move its people. This was based on my conversations with the then head of ICRC.”

Harden's assessment was corroborated by many foreign journalists and NGOs over the entire period of Hamas's rule in Gaza. A 2006 PBS documentary titled “Gaza E.R.” explained and confirmed with footage that “armed militants inside Shifa are one of the hospital's biggest problems.”¹⁴¹ During the civil war between Hamas and Fatah for control of the Strip in 2007, Human Rights Watch documented gun battles between the two groups in and around two hospitals. The report said, “Fatah gunmen began firing mortars and rocket-propelled grenades at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, drawing Hamas fire from inside the building, killing one Hamas and one Fatah fighter.”¹⁴² A 2008 article in *The New York Times* documented how “armed Hamas militants in civilian clothes roved the halls” of Shifa Hospital. The article also described how Hamas operatives killed five accused collaborators in the hospital.¹⁴³ In a 2024 report, the newspaper also recounted how in the 2014 Gaza conflict, Hamas routinely held news conferences at the hospital and used it as a meeting place for Hamas officials to speak with journalists.¹⁴⁴ A 2014 report in *The Washington Post* stated that the hospital “has become the *de facto* headquarters for Hamas leaders, who can be seen in the hallways and offices.”¹⁴⁵ A 2015 report from Amnesty International described how Hamas used Shifa Hospital as a location to interrogate and torture suspected collaborators.¹⁴⁶

In November 2023, Dutch journalist Jan Franke explained that the use of Shifa Hospital by Hamas was common knowledge, including by UN staff. He wrote on X: “CAUTION – I have been to the Al Shifa hospital several times as a reporter during the #Israel #Gaza war in 2014 and also afterwards. It is a vast complex. I have personally seen #Hamas fighters there. Everyone in #Gaza including #UN staff knows about dual use of these facilities.”¹⁴⁷ Franke posted a photograph he took secretly in 2014 showing uniformed Hamas fighters stationed

¹⁴⁰ Dave Harden (@Dave_Harden), X post, 15 November 2023, 12:46pm, https://x.com/Dave_Harden/status/1724770870332174723.

¹⁴¹ WIDE ANGLE, “Shifa Hospital in Gaza”, *YouTube* video, posted by StandWithUs, 19 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcDwd9voGK8>; “Gaza E.R. – Introduction”, *PBS*, 11 July 2011, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/episodes/by-geography/middle-east/gaza-er-introduction/971/>.

¹⁴² “Gaza: Armed Palestinian Groups Commit Grave Crimes”, Human Rights Watch, 12 June 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/06/12/gaza-armed-palestinian-groups-commit-grave-crimes>.

¹⁴³ Taghreed El-Khodary and Ethan Bronner, “In the midst of war's horror, a terrible vengeance”, *The New York Times*, 29 December 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/29/world/africa/29iht-gaza.4.18986499.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Rosenberg, et al., “A Tunnel Offers Clues to How Hamas Uses Gaza's Hospitals”.

¹⁴⁵ William Booth, “While Israel held its fire, the militant group Hamas did not”, *The Washington Post*, 15 July 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/while-israel-held-its-fire-the-militant-group-hamas-did-not/2014/07/15/116fd3d7-3c0f-4413-94a9-2ab16af1445d_story.html.

¹⁴⁶ “Gaza: Palestinians tortured, summarily killed by Hamas forces during 2014 conflict”, Amnesty International, 27 May 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/05/gaza-palestinians-tortured-summarily-killed-by-hamas-forces-during-2014-conflict/>.

¹⁴⁷ Jan Franke (@Franke_schrijft), Xpost, 16 November 2023, 6:25am, https://x.com/Franke_schrijft/status/1725037285249306726.

at an entrance to the hospital.¹⁴⁸ Franke added that once the war with Israel started, Hamas fighters had changed into civilian clothes and it was rare to see any more uniformed members.

US intelligence agencies independently corroborated the use of Shifa Hospital by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad for command and control activities, both within the complex and in sites underneath, according to declassified information released in 2024.¹⁴⁹ According to US intelligence, based on information it obtained about activities at the hospital, the IDF did not find a larger Hamas presence in the hospital because Hamas evacuated its fighters and destroyed documents and electronics prior to the IDF's arrival, which Hamas knew was going to happen weeks in advance. US National Security Spokesman John Kirby said, "We have information that confirms that Hamas is using that particular hospital for a command and control node."¹⁵⁰

Pentagon officials also corroborated, based on independent intelligence, the use of hospitals as command centres by Hamas. On 17 October 2023, Pentagon spokesperson Sabrina Singh said in a press conference:

Hamis does integrate in high civilian populations and tries to set up command centers in places where, should be used for innocent civilians to be treated, should be used by innocent civilians to seek medical care... Hamas is willing to use innocent civilians, essentially as human shields. That's exactly what we saw with ISIS.¹⁵¹

She reiterated the use of the hospital by militants again in a press conference on 15 November 2023:

We do have information that Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad [PIJ] uses some hospitals in the Gaza Strip including the Al Shifa Hospital as a way to conceal and support their military operations and hold hostages. They have tunnels underneath these hospitals. And so Hamas and PIJ members operate a command and control node from Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, they have weapons stored there, and are prepared to respond to an Israeli military operation against the facility... I'm just telling you what we as the intelligence community assesses is happening in Gaza City, how Hamas is using these hospitals to operate.¹⁵²

During the IDF's assault on the hospital to root out Hamas elements, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said: "We would love to see Hamas vacate the hospitals that it is using (as) command posts immediately. We would love to see all people that are calling for Israel to take steps to protect hospitals, call for Hamas to vacate the hospitals and stop using civilians as human shields."¹⁵³

Despite multiple layers of corroborating evidence of the illegal use by Hamas of Shifa Hospital over nearly 20 years, when the IDF asserted that Hamas was using the hospital for its operations in the 7 October war, scepticism was expressed by many media outlets and NGOs.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ JanFranke (@Franke_schrijft), Xpost, 16 November 2023, 6:25am, https://x.com/Franke_schrijft/status/1725037285249306726.

¹⁴⁹ Julian E. Barnes, "Hamas Used Gaza Hospital as a Command Center, U.S. Intelligence Says", *The New York Times*, 2 January 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/02/us/politics/gaza-hospital-hamas.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Julian E. Barnes, "Hamas Used Gaza Hospital as a Command Center, U.S. Intelligence Says", *The New York Times*, 2 January 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/02/us/politics/gaza-hospital-hamas.html>.

¹⁵¹ Sabrina Singh, "Pentagon Spokesperson Points Out Hamas Uses Civilians As 'Human Shields' After Attack On Hospital", YouTube video, posted by *Forbes Breaking News*, 18 October 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCnIH2PFewU>.

¹⁵² Israel Nitzan (@IsraelNitzan), X post, 15 November 2023, 5:27am, <https://x.com/IsraelNitzan/status/1724660359313666078>.

¹⁵³ Brendan Cole, "US Calls On Hamas to Stop Using 'Human Shields' Amid International Outcry", *Newsweek*, 14 November 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/israel-hamas-gaza-shifa-human-shield-1843400>.

¹⁵⁴ Brendan O'Neill, "Al-Shifa Hospital and the pathological distrust of Israel", *Spiked*, 20 November 2023, <https://www.spiked-online.com/2023/11/20/al-shifa-hospital-and-the-pathological-distrust-of-israel/>.

Eventually, the evidence was proven to be indisputable, such as when a lengthy tunnel was uncovered and confirmed by foreign journalists to run beneath the hospital grounds. The use of hospitals by Hamas has even been criticised by officials from the Palestinian Authority.

In December 2024, a former official from the PA Security Forces, Adnan Al-Damiri, criticised Hamas for using hospitals in Gaza noting, “the summonses, interrogations, and extortions continue in whatever remains of the hospitals.” Al-Damisi posted a copy of the summons issued by Hamas.¹⁵⁵

In November 2023, the IDF surrounded and captured Shifa Hospital after issuing a lengthy advance warning of its intentions. Israel stated that the hospital was used by Hamas as a command centre both above and below ground.

By the time the IDF arrived at the hospital, Hamas had removed nearly all traces of its presence at the facility. Nonetheless, the IDF located and destroyed a tunnel exceeding 200 metres in length, which ran under the hospital grounds and included bunkers, living quarters, a communications room and bathrooms. It also provided a nine-minute uncut video as evidence.¹⁵⁶

A *New York Times* investigative article confirmed the details of the 200-metre-long tunnel with a detailed 3D map of the underground structure and its rooms.¹⁵⁷ The IDF also found weapons in various locations in the hospital during its initial raid of the premises, which was shown to international media.¹⁵⁸ While the IDF did not provide evidence of the extensive multi-level command and control centre that it purported was under the hospital, it is indisputable that Hamas built and operated a large tunnel complex under the Shifa Hospital grounds, thereby using the medical facility as a civilian shield for its military operations.

The IDF also released dozens of videos and photographs of weapons found in various locations in the hospital, as well as encounters with Hamas operatives inside the hospital.¹⁵⁹

Shifa Hospital was used immediately after 7 October to hold hostages, verified by video evidence released by the IDF and also from open sources. US intelligence also assessed that the hospital was used to hold some hostages, but they were removed as Hamas evacuated in advance of the IDF assault in the area.¹⁶⁰

In November 2023, Israel released several videos and photographs, dated from 7 October, showing operatives forcing hostages into Shifa Hospital, including Nepalese and Thai civilians; armed operatives roaming inside the hospital and entering the building; captured IDF vehicles entering the hospital grounds; and various weapons found inside the hospital.¹⁶¹ Several still images from the videos are shown below.

¹⁵⁵ Ephraim D. Tepler and Itamar Marcus, “Palestinian Authority: Hamas is using hospitals for military purposes”, Palestinian Media Watch, 30 December 2024, <https://palwatch.org/page/36787>.

¹⁵⁶ Israel Defense Forces, “Behind the Blast Door: Hamas Terrorist Base Under a Hospital”, *YouTube* video, 22 November 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUBxjB2NFMU>.

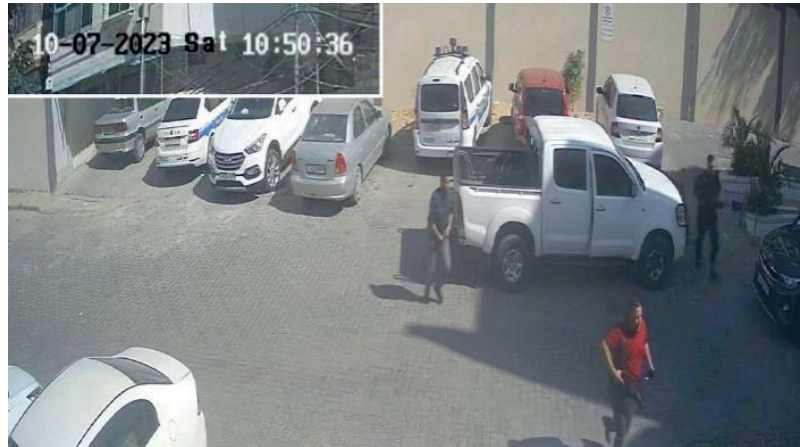
¹⁵⁷ Rosenberg, et al., “A Tunnel Offers Clues to How Hamas Uses Gaza’s Hospitals”.

¹⁵⁸ Trey Yingst (@TreyYingst), X post, 15 November 2023, 11:30pm, <https://x.com/TreyYingst/status/1724932849931805070>.

¹⁵⁹ IDF, “Uncovering Hamas’s Use of Al-Shifa Hospital”, 17 November 2023: <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/ac818d35-faa3-4a68-b472-cc7674925264>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/66aea22a-7bb0-47b4-8450-deea73e103df>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC3003264>.

¹⁶⁰ Barnes, “Hamas Used Gaza Hospital as a Command Center, U.S. Intelligence Says”.

¹⁶¹ “Hamas Takes Hostages to Shifa Hospital After Abduction”, IDF, 20 November 2023, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/on-hamas-2023-resources/hamas-takes-hostages-to-shifa-hospital-after-abduction>; “Footage of a hostage taken by Hamas terrorists into Shifa Hospital”, IDF, 19 November 2023, <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC191120236486845465465>; Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 21 November 2023, 1:33am, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1726775852480835876>; “IDF vehicles taken to Shifa Hospital on October 7th”, IDF, 19 November 2023, <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC19112023468645854>; “Hamas Takes Hostages to Shifa Hospital After Abduction”, IDF, 20 November 2023, <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/ac818d35-faa3-4a68-b472-cc7674925264>.





Additional footage taken by Gazans and aired on Israeli media and other outlets in October 2024 unmistakably shows armed Hamas operatives in a military vehicle and pick-up truck entering the grounds of Shifa Hospital on 7 October, with teeming crowds cheering. The military vehicle pulls up to the front of the hospital and several armed operatives are clearly visible.¹⁶²



There are also various reports of combat between Hamas and IDF soldiers at Shifa Hospital, further evidencing the use of the hospital by Hamas combatants, even in Arab media.¹⁶³ In an operation inside the hospital in March 2024, the IDF eliminated senior Hamas member Faig Mabhouh¹⁶⁴ and other Hamas operatives, during combat action that saw the death of IDF

¹⁶² Israel News Pulse (@israelnewspulse), X post, 2 April 2024, <https://x.com/israelnewspulse/status/1851210726775398819>.

¹⁶³ "Palestinian fighters battle Israeli forces around Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital", *Al Arabiya News*, 28 March 2024, <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2024/03/28/Palestinian-fighters-battle-Israeli-forces-around-Gaza-s-Al-Shifa-Hospital>.

¹⁶⁴ Emanuel Fabian, "Top Hamas man killed in Shifa hospital is brother of terror group leader assassinated in Dubai", *The Times of Israel*, 18 March 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/top-hamas-man-killed-in-shifa-hospital-is-brother-of-terror-group-leader-assassinated-in-dubai/.

soldier Matan Vinogradov. An Al Jazeera report from the IDF operation at Shifa Hospital cites Palestinian journalist Wadea Abu Alsoud, who the report says was “trapped inside the medical complex” and reported “intense clashes” in the area of the hospital.¹⁶⁵ The IDF has released additional footage of combat operations and weapons found inside the hospital during its action in March 2024.¹⁶⁶

Kamal Adwan Hospital

The Kamal Adwan Hospital has been attacked by the IDF multiple times throughout the war due to its ongoing use as a command centre and base for Hamas operatives, most recently in December 2024. According to the IDF, the operation resulted in the arrest of 240 operatives, 15 of whom participated in the 7 October massacre.¹⁶⁷ Israel released the names and ID numbers of several Hamas and PIJ operatives who were in Israel on 7 October as evidence of the hospital's utilisation by these groups.¹⁶⁸ The IDF arrested the hospital's director, Dr Hassam Abu Safiya, amid significant international criticism claiming he was merely a civilian. However, evidence indicates that the director was referred to as a “Colonel” in Palestinian media, and the facility was specifically recognised as a military hospital.¹⁶⁹ In October 2024, the IDF released videos and photos of its operations inside Kamal Adwan from body camera footage taken by special forces, showcasing weapons discovered in the facility.¹⁷⁰

Although Hamas disputes all accusations of using hospitals, there is third-party evidence that Kamal Adwan was a Hamas base throughout the conflict. In an interview on Rudaw TV, Kurdish doctor Baxtiyar Baram, who worked at the hospital for four weeks in April and May 2024, described how Hamas utilised Kamal Adwan for its operations.¹⁷¹ When asked by the host why Israel attacked certain hospitals the doctor replied that, “Hamas, as a political and military organization, needed to exploit everywhere to shelter them in their strategic positions... I have seen it with my eyes that the hospitals have been used for hiding Hamas leaders...Yes, yes, we saw them and even spoke with them including one of the founders of Hamas, Mr. Munir Albursh.”

In January 2025, following the first hostage release under the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, the hostages (Emily Damari, Romi Gonen and Doron Steinbrecher) revealed that they were held at different times at Kamal Adwan. The hospital was thus used by Hamas to commit the crime of hostage taking under the LOAC.¹⁷² It is highly unlikely that the director of the hospital, Dr Abu Safiya, was unaware of the presence of Israeli hostages on hospital grounds, due to his senior rank within the Hamas military structure.

Refer to Annex A for additional evidence of hospitals and medical facilities exploited by Hamas for military purposes.

¹⁶⁵ “Israeli forces storm Gaza’s al-Shifa Hospital”, *Al Jazeera*, 18 March 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/18/israeli-army-opens-fire-inside-gazas-al-shifa-hospital-officials-say>.

¹⁶⁶ IDF, “Gaza War Day 165: IDF releases footage of commandos battling Hamas operatives in Al-Shifa hospital”, *YouTube* video, posted by *The Economic Times*, 19 March 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhB-haXHK74>.

¹⁶⁷ Israel Foreign Ministry (@IsraelMFA4), X post, 2 January 2025, 5:20pm, <https://x.com/IsraelMFA/status/1874868435605160260>; Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 5 January 2025, 4:16pm, <https://x.com/IDF/status/187593933322211511>.

¹⁶⁸ Israel (@Israel), X post, 3 January 2025, 10:05pm, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1875121232221196379>.

¹⁶⁹ Eitan Fischberger (@EFischberger), X post, 27 December 2024, 12:47pm, <https://x.com/EFischberger/status/1872625254788722784>.

¹⁷⁰ Israel Defense Forces, “IDF Conducts Precise Operation Against Hamas Terrorist Stronghold Embedded Inside the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabaliya, While Preventing Harm to Civilians”, *Telegram* post, 28 October 2024, <https://t.me/idfofficial/11879>.

¹⁷¹ “After returning from Gaza, Kurdish physician says Hamas leaders take shelter at hospitals”, *Rudaw*, 28 May 2024, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/world/28052024>.

¹⁷² Amelie Botbol, “Israeli intel indicates Hamas held hostages at new Gaza hospital as UN health agency criticized for inaction”, *Fox News*, 21 January 2025, <https://www.foxnews.com/world/israeli-intel-indicates-hamas-held-hostages-new-gaza-hospital-un-health-agency-criticized-inaction>.

7. Schools Used for Military Purposes

Hamas's human shield strategy also encompasses the use of school buildings which are located throughout Gaza, including UNRWA facilities. The exploitation of schools for Hamas's military operations is split into two time periods. The first is prior to 7 October 2023 and during the initial months of the war, when Hamas primarily used schools to store weapons, fire rockets at Israel and as a cover for underground tunnels and shafts. The second period occurred during later stages of the war when IDF action against many existing Hamas command centres pushed Hamas into using schools that had been turned into shelters for civilians. The school year in Gaza was suspended on 6 November 2023, and had not yet resumed at the time of writing. Schools in Gaza have not been used for educational purposes since then.¹⁷³

The use of UNRWA schools by Hamas is not new to the current war. In June 2017, UNRWA discovered a tunnel that passed under two adjacent agency schools in Gaza, the Maghazi Elementary Boys A&B School and the Maghazi Preparatory Boys School. An UNRWA press release stated:

UNRWA condemns the existence of such tunnels in the strongest possible terms. It is unacceptable that students and staff are placed at risk in such a way. The construction and presence of tunnels under UN premises are incompatible with the respect of privileges and immunities owed to the United Nations under applicable international law, which provides that UN premises shall be inviolable. The sanctity and neutrality of UN premises must be preserved at all times.

UNRWA has robustly intervened and protested to Hamas in Gaza. It has also informed them that the Agency intends to seal the tunnel under its premises, as an immediate priority. We will not allow any students or staff into the building until the issue is resolved.¹⁷⁴

Israel has asserted since the beginning of the war that UNRWA schools were used by Hamas and, in particular, that UNRWA personnel were, in many cases, Hamas operatives, using the cover of schools to mask their military activity. An important investigative report published in *The New York Times* in December 2024 corroborated Israel's claims, based on interviews the paper conducted with current and former UNRWA employees and verification of relevant documents. The investigation revealed "at least 24 people employed by UNRWA – in 24 different schools – who were members of Hamas or Islamic Jihad".¹⁷⁵ These militants were often found to be "top administrators at the schools – principals or deputy principals". The report confirmed that names and identification numbers on reviewed documents matched those in a separate UNRWA database. The report noted that: "In several cases, educators remained employed by UNRWA even after Israel provided written warnings that they were militants." The article adds: "Residents of Gaza said in interviews that the idea that Hamas had operatives in UNRWA schools was an open secret. One educator on Israel's list of 100 was regularly seen after hours in Hamas fatigues carrying a Kalashnikov."

The use of schools later in the war by Hamas and other militant groups has been well documented. A September 2024 article in *The New York Times*, titled "Unwilling to Be Human Shields, Some Gazans Turn Gunmen Away From Shelters", exposes the exploitation of schools by Hamas.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Ruwaida Amer, "In this relentless war, oh how I miss my students", *Al Jazeera*, 12 November 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/11/12/in-this-relentless-war-oh-how-i-miss-my-students>.

¹⁷⁴ "UNRWA Condemns Neutrality Violation in Gaza in the Strongest Possible Terms", UNRWA, 9 June 2017, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-condemns-neutrality-violation-gaza-strongest-possible-terms>.

¹⁷⁵ Jo Becker and Adam Rasgon, "Records Seized by Israel Show Hamas Presence in U.N. Schools", *The New York Times*, 8 December 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/08/world/middleeast/hamas-unrwa-schools.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Shbair and Bigg, "Unwilling to Be Human Shields, Some Gazans Turn Gunmen Away From Shelters".

The report describes how civilian residents acted to stop Hamas operatives from using the schools where they were sheltering, knowing that their presence would turn the location into a target for IDF attack. The article recounts how Nasser al-Zaanin, who had taken refuge at the Abdul Kareem al-Aklouk school in Deir al-Balah, turned away Hamas members who wanted to station themselves at the school. The article says other residents of “school shelters” in Gaza “blocked armed militias from moving into these shelters”. The civilian residents are well aware that a Hamas presence will invite strikes by the IDF.

The IDF announced numerous airstrikes on school compounds that it said were used by Hamas and other groups as command centres or shelters for its militants. A review of IDF information releases shows at least 39 separate school buildings were hit by airstrikes; in each case, the IDF said that it targeted combatants who were using the school either as a command centre or to shelter their fighters. Although there is no video evidence available that shows combatants inside the school building prior to the attack, the IDF has released specific names of militants that it eliminated in some of these strikes.

Examples of this include:

- On 6 June 2024, the IDF struck two areas of a school compound in Nuseirat where Israel said Islamic Jihad terrorists who participated in the 7 October attack were embedded. Israel named 17 of the militants who were eliminated.¹⁷⁷
- On 10 August 2024, the IDF announced that it had struck a large group of Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants embedded in the Al Taba'een school compound where a mosque was located. The IDF later released the names of all 31 fighters eliminated and detailed images of the structure before and after the strike.¹⁷⁸ Hamas disputed the presence of militants in the school.¹⁷⁹
- In an airstrike on the Al Jaouni school in central Gaza in September 2024, the IDF said it targeted a command and control centre embedded within the facility. Israel named Hamas.¹⁸⁰
- The IDF has also released other credible evidence, such as a video of Palestinian militants firing from inside a school and mosque in Beit Hanoun.¹⁸¹

While there is no further verification of the details of these particular attacks and many others, the Israeli claims are credible given the reporting in *The New York Times* soon after, confirming how militants sought shelter in school compounds.¹⁸² The notion that Israel would invest personnel and weaponry to strike 39 schools up to January 2025 solely to kill sheltering civilians instead of targeting combatants, is not credible considering the intense worldwide scrutiny Israel has faced and certain limitations on weaponry supplied by the US during its prosecution of the war in Gaza.

Refer to Annex A for additional evidence of schools exploited by Hamas for military purposes.

¹⁷⁷ “Hamas Compound Embedded Inside an UNRWA School in the Area of Nuseirat”, IDF, 6 June 2024, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/the-unrwa-hamas-connection/exploitation-of-unrwa-schools/hamas-compound-embedded-inside-an-unrwa-school-in-the-area-of-nuseirat/>.

¹⁷⁸ “31 Terrorists Eliminated in a Mosque in Al-Taba'een School Compound”, IDF, 10 August 2024, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/august-24-pr/31-terrorists-eliminated-in-a-mosque-in-al-taba-eeen-school-compound/>.

¹⁷⁹ Raja Abdulrahim, Victoria Kim and Aaron Boxerman, “Israel Criticized After Strike Kills Scores in Gaza”, *The New York Times*, 10 August 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/10/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-strike-school.html>.

¹⁸⁰ LTC Nadav Shoshani (@LTC_Shoshani), X post, 12 September 2024, 3:11pm, https://x.com/LTC_Shoshani/status/1834233322580394016.

¹⁸¹ Israel Defense Forces (@IDF), X post, 15 November 2023, <https://x.com/IDF/status/1733419795821871319>.

¹⁸² Adam Rasgon and Aaron Boxerman, “Israeli Airstrikes Hit Gaza School Shelters, Killing Dozens”, *The New York Times*, 10 September 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/10/world/middleeast/airstrikes-gaza-school-shelters-hamas.html>.

8. Humanitarian Zones Used for Military Purposes

Humanitarian zones were established in Gaza following evacuation orders issued in October 2023 by the IDF to the civilian population ahead of Israel's ground assault.¹⁸³ These zones expanded throughout 2024, with the largest zone in the Mawasi region of southern Gaza near the coast. Consistent with its broader human shield tactics, Hamas predictably exploited these zones to shield its military operations, using them to conceal personnel and weapons and to launch rocket attacks against Israel.

The most prominent use by Hamas of these humanitarian zones was the establishment of a command centre by senior Hamas leader Mohammed Deif within the tent encampments. The Institute for the Study of War provided details on the IDF airstrike within the Mawasi humanitarian zone near Khan Yunis, where Deif was holding a meeting along with Khan Yunis brigade commander Rafa'a Salameh.¹⁸⁴ The July 2024 airstrike killed both senior Hamas military officials.

High-quality video of the airstrike released by the IDF (see still image below) shows the exact location of the attack within tent encampments and other structures in the humanitarian zone.¹⁸⁵ Deif and other Hamas operatives deliberately used the humanitarian area in an effort to impede an Israeli attack on him. Only through high-quality intelligence was Israel able to precisely locate and strike his position; however, there were still reports of civilian collateral damage resulting from the attack.



Israel has repeatedly claimed over the past year that Hamas and other militant groups fired rockets from areas within or near humanitarian zones in Gaza.

¹⁸³ Siladitya Ray, "Israeli Military Announces Humanitarian Zone in Southern Gaza and Says Aid Will Be Sent 'If Necessary'", *Forbes*, 18 October 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/siladityaray/2023/10/18/israeli-military-announces-humanitarian-zone-in-southern-gaza-and-says-aid-will-be-sent-if-necessary/>.

¹⁸⁴ Institute for the Study of War (@TheStudyofWar), X post, 14 July 2024, 1:08am, <https://x.com/TheStudyofWar/status/1812277921110995336>.

¹⁸⁵ Israel (@Israel), X post, 1 August 2024, 11:04am, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1818950969415049596>.

In December 2023, Israel reported that Hamas launched 116 rockets from these zones, 38 of which landed inside Gaza.¹⁸⁶ Israel released additional information in June and August 2024, including maps and data on rocket launches near aid warehouses and humanitarian zones.¹⁸⁷ Specific evidence has not been disclosed by Israel or verified for most of these launches, partly due to the difficulty of capturing rocket launches on high-quality video in real time. However, the IDF has released numerous uncut videos and clear images showing rocket launchers and some actual attacks within and near humanitarian zones and civilian tents. For instance, in April 2024, the IDF released video evidence and images displaying several rocket launchers located adjacent to humanitarian shelters and tents in the Khan Younis area, as shown in one image below. Several of the tents are prominently marked with the flag of the UAE, situated close to the launchers. The video footage also shows a live rocket launch (see still image below) and the subsequent destruction of the launchers (April 2024).¹⁸⁸



¹⁸⁶ "116 launches from the Humanitarian Zone identified", Israel Defense Forces, 13 December 2023, <https://www.idf.il/en/minisites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/116-launches-from-the-humanitarian-zone-identified/>.

¹⁸⁷ Emanuel (Mannie) Fabian (@manniefabian), X post, 15 June 2024, 12:48pm, <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1801944811953365356>; Israel (@Israel), X post, 7 August 2024, 7:52am, <https://x.com/Israel/status/1821076822555054436>.

¹⁸⁸ Emanuel Fabian, "IDF says it hit Gaza rocket launchers near humanitarian shelters, after moving civilians", *The Times of Israel*, 8 April 2024, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/idf-says-it-hit-gaza-rocket-launchers-near-humanitarian-shelters-after-moving-civilians/; Israel Defense Forces, "IDF Official Statement", *Telegram* post, 8 April 2024, <https://t.me/idfofficial/7377>.

Humanitarian zones meant to protect civilians were also used by Hamas to hold Israeli hostages, constituting war crimes.¹⁸⁹ Emily Damari, Romi Gonen and Doron Steinbrecher, the first Israeli hostages released by Hamas under the ceasefire agreement in January 2025, reported that they were kept in humanitarian areas for part of their captivity.¹⁹⁰ This also served Hamas's strategy of making it difficult for Israel to engage in hostage rescue operations by using Gazan civilians in humanitarian zones as shields.

Refer to Annex A for further evidence of humanitarian zones used by Hamas for military purposes.

¹⁸⁹ "Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949: Article 34 - Hostages", IHL Databases, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949/article-34>.

¹⁹⁰ "Hostages were only told yesterday they were being freed; they knew families were battling for them", *The Times of Israel*, 20 January 2025, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/hostages-were-only-told-yesterday-they-were-being-freed-they-knew-families-were-battling-for-them/.

9. Hamas's Policy of Dressing in Civilian Clothes

It is indisputable that Hamas operatives avoid wearing military uniforms to prevent identification, dressing solely in civilian clothes while engaging in combat in Gaza. This action deliberately blurs the lines between civilian and combatant. By appearing as civilians, the IDF is compelled to continuously assess its military actions against Hamas to ensure that the targeted individual is indeed a combatant. Undoubtedly, this results in mistakes that increase civilian casualties.

A *New York Times* article on Hamas's battle strategy cited above verified dozens of Hamas-released propaganda videos showing its fighters dressed in jeans, sweatpants, sandals and sneakers engaging in attacks on IDF soldiers and tanks.¹⁹¹ The article cites a Hamas member who acknowledges the purpose of dressing in civilian clothing is to avoid detection, adding that this action is "natural for a resistance movement and there's nothing unusual about it". The report explained that a Hamas aim was "creating confusion about what a combatant looks like by dressing its fighters as civilians". This strategy, combined with the use of weapons pre-positioned in civilian locations, also allows Hamas to present all of its casualties as civilians.

Although the use of civilian garb for combat is not specifically a violation against the use of human shields as defined in the LOAC, it is still a grave violation of the LOAC under Geneva Article I.37 which prohibits "the feigning of civilian, non-combatant status".¹⁹² As the commentary to the convention notes, when combatants dress in civilian clothes, it "compromises the fundamental distinction between civilians and combatants, which forms the basis for the law of armed conflict."¹⁹³

Hundreds of propaganda videos filmed by Hamas and other militant groups and posted on social media demonstrate the organisation's strict policy of engaging in combat exclusively in civilian clothing. We reviewed dozens of videos created and shared by these groups, and in all instances, fighters involved in active combat were dressed in civilian attire. Several still images from these videos are presented below.¹⁹⁴ In the first image, the man on the right is concealing a weapon inside a blanket or carpet. The second image depicts a group of men setting up a booby-trap.



¹⁹¹ Adam Rasgon and Aaron Boxerman, "Muhammad Deif, a Top Hamas Commander, Is Dead, Israel Says", *The New York Times*, 1 August 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/13/world/middleeast/hamas-gaza-israel-fighting.html>.

¹⁹² "Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), 8 June 1977: Article 37 - Prohibition of perfidy", IHL Databases, <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-37>.

¹⁹³ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-37>.

¹⁹⁴ Jon Elmer (@jonelmer), X post, 19 May 2024, 12:54am, <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1791980792337330435>; More at: <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1791546774793928969>; <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1791148237782450306>; <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1788740379648389165>.



An August 2024 article from *The Telegraph*, titled “How Hamas fights”, examined dozens of Hamas’s own videos and commented on how they showed Hamas fighting in civilian clothes.¹⁹⁵ One example from this review shows a man firing mortars in jeans and sandals (overleaf).

¹⁹⁵ Jotam Confino, “How Hamas fights”, *The Telegraph*, 4 August 2024, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/08/04/how-hamas-fights-israel-war-gaza-propaganda/>.



The IDF has recorded many examples of Hamas and other militant groups engaging in active combat on the streets and elsewhere in Gaza in civilian clothes. Refer to Annex A for additional examples.

After Israel and Hamas agreed on a hostage release and ceasefire in mid-January 2025, many videos and photos showed armed operatives wearing their uniforms in public, as seen in the image below.¹⁹⁶ Numerous commentators noted the sudden ability of Hamas members to obtain their military uniforms, sharply underscoring Hamas's official policy of intentionally posing as civilians during combat to confuse the IDF. It is clear that once there was no longer a threat of IDF action against the operatives, they felt no need to blend in with the civilian population as they had during combat operations.



¹⁹⁶ Emanuel Fabian (@manniefabian), X post, 19 January 2025, 3:01pm, <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1880993996438180215>.

10. Hamas Ruses of War and Other Human Shield Tactics

Hamas cynically uses the civilian population as a cover for its military operations and as a shield aimed at impeding the IDF's efforts to strike its military assets. This extends to other ruses of war and documented tactics, such as booby-trapping toys and other civilian objects; instructing civilians to ignore evacuation warnings; theft of humanitarian aid; and sending civilians, including children, to survey IDF positions or act as lookouts.

Disguising weapons

Documentation of these ruses is not new to the 7 October war. During the July 2014 Gaza war, Canadian journalist Patrick Martin was in the Shejaiya neighbourhood of Gaza and commented on what he witnessed: "Some [militant fighters] bore their weapons openly, slung over their shoulder, but at least two, disguised as women, were seen walking off with weapons partly concealed under their robes. Another had his weapon wrapped in a baby blanket and held on his chest as if it were an infant."¹⁹⁷ Journalist Janis Mackey Frayer, now with NBC News, saw the same thing, writing in an X post in July 2014: "Inside Shejaiya we also saw several Hamas gunmen. One passed dressed in a woman's headscarf... tip of a gun poked out from under cloak."¹⁹⁸

Ambushing and setting traps for the IDF

According to an investigative report in *The Washington Post* from December 2023, IDF soldiers found dolls and children's backpacks with speakers playing sounds of crying.¹⁹⁹ These booby-trapped civilian items were placed near a tunnel shaft to lure IDF soldiers. Furthermore, there were recordings of weeping and persons speaking in Hebrew to trick IDF soldiers into believing hostages were nearby. A large explosive device was hidden among blankets inside a child's room and other bombs were hanging in sandbags on walls, designed to explode on the head level of soldiers.

Hamas's own videos revealed how it engaged in various human shield tactics. In one video, Hamas members filmed themselves laying an explosive mine inside a building among children's toys, which resulted in the death of IDF soldiers. See still image below.²⁰⁰



A Hamas operative setting a mine in among children's toys in a residential building | SOURCE: Hamas propaganda

¹⁹⁷ Patrick Martin, "Death tolls mount as Israel expands offensive, Hamas resistance hardens", *The Globe and Mail*, 20 July 2014, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/thousands-flee-gaza-homes-as-israel-expands-ground-assault/article19683732/>.

¹⁹⁸ Janis Mackey Frayer (@janisfrayer), X post, 20 July 2014, 3:22pm, <https://x.com/janisfrayer/status/490864436518080512>.

¹⁹⁹ William Booth, Itay Stern and Hazem Balousha, "Ambushes and booby traps: Hamas tactics stir confusion, fear, danger", *The Washington Post*, 22 December 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/12/22/hamas-booby-traps-gaza/>.

²⁰⁰ Confino, "How Hamas fights".

Propaganda videos from Hamas and other militant groups sometimes show their operatives engaging in illegal acts of war. The still image below from a November 2024 propaganda video shows operatives placing an explosive for a booby-trap inside a bag that is marked “fortified wheat flour”.²⁰¹



Instructing civilians to be human shields

Another human shield tactic employed by Hamas is when its fighters intentionally mingle with civilians and tell them to ignore IDF evacuation warnings. The reason is clear: if civilians remain in a place where the IDF intends to act, Israel will have a more difficult time targeting Hamas assets in that location.

For example, prior to Israel's impending ground operation in north Gaza, the IDF requested that civilians move south. According to a report in *The Wall Street Journal*, Hamas instructed civilians to stay in their homes and ignore the calls to evacuate.²⁰² An investigative report in *The New York Times* from July 2024 confirmed similar practices where Hamas has abused the movement of civilians to mask its combat activities: “Sometimes, [Hamas] have hid among the few civilians who decided to remain in their neighborhoods despite Israeli orders to evacuate, or accompanied civilians as they returned to areas that the Israelis had captured and then abandoned.”²⁰³ The same report verified the use by Hamas of children to confuse IDF soldiers. The authors describe Hamas “Ambushing Israeli soldiers with small groups of fighters dressed as civilians, as well as using civilians, including children, to act as lookouts.”

In November 2023, Professor Michael N. Schmitt of the US Military Academy West Point wrote an article for the Lieber Institute West Point discussing human shields. The piece specifically covered the tactic of discouraging civilians from evacuating a war zone:

Hamis is actively discouraging civilians from evacuating to the south and is reportedly even preventing them from leaving, as in the case of blocking roads. Both actions qualify

²⁰¹ Jon Elmer (@jonelmer), X post, 8 November 2024, 6:50pm, <https://x.com/jonelmer/status/1854959674031775891>.

²⁰² Summer Said, “Hamas Tells Civilians Not to Evacuate to the South”, *The Wall Street Journal*, 14 October 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/israel-hamas-war-gaza-strip/card/hamas-tells-civilians-not-to-evacuate-to-the-south-T9TX4p5KH1930OHJDyfp>.

²⁰³ Kingsley, et al., “How Hamas Is Fighting in Gaza: Tunnels, Traps and Ambushes”.

as using human shields. While there may be other motivations for the encouragement, it would be naive to believe that Hamas does not intend the presence of civilians to frustrate IDF operations; indeed, as I have explained elsewhere, Hamas had a duty to encourage the civilian population to evacuate by the IDF warning. After all, the use of civilian shields is a classic technique in asymmetric warfare for militarily weaker forces. Of course, given the IDF's air and ground operations into Gaza, Hamas's efforts to physically prevent civilians from leaving unambiguously qualify as the use of human shields.²⁰⁴

Stealing humanitarian aid

Another Hamas tactic that puts civilians at risk is the theft of humanitarian aid. There is clear evidence that Hamas operatives and other armed militants have commandeered humanitarian aid. UN agencies have commented on these acts. For example, in November 2024, the UN said that armed men stole food and aid from 98 trucks over a weekend period.²⁰⁵ Many videos of armed militants taking control of aid trucks and distribution have been documented (see the still image below from a video taken in the Rafah area in September 2024).²⁰⁶ By stealing aid while in civilian clothing, Hamas once again blurred the line between civilians acting to obtain aid and combatants.



²⁰⁴ Michael N. Schmitt, "Israel – Hamas 2023 Symposium – What is and is not Human Shielding?", Lieber Institute West Point, 3 November 2023, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/what-is-and-is-not-human-shielding/>.

²⁰⁵ "Theft of aid trucks sends prices soaring in central Gaza", *NBC News*, 19 November 2024, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/israel-gaza-war-aid-trucks-theft-prices-soaring-rcna180761>.

²⁰⁶ Israel Defense Forces, "IDF Official Announcement", *Telegram* post, 21 September 2024, <https://t.me/idfofficial/10178>; More at: "Armed Militants Taking Over Humanitarian Aid Trucks in the Rafah Area", <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/d9f5e016-6433-44f6-a324-ea64a3c5a178>.

Conclusion

The systematic exploitation of Gaza's civilian infrastructure by Hamas to shield its military assets and armed personnel represents a deeply concerning violation of international law and a direct challenge to the principles governing armed conflict. The evidence presented in this report underscores the deliberate and multi-faceted nature of Hamas's human shield strategy, which escalates the suffering of the civilian population and distorts global narratives about accountability in the Gaza conflict.

Hamas's strategy of embedding military objectives within civilian areas transforms densely populated urban regions into complex and perilous battlefields. This approach compels the IDF to engage in combat under unique legal and ethical constraints, as Hamas seeks to exploit civilian casualties to delegitimise Israeli military actions. The selective omission or minimisation of this tactic by international organisations, NGOs and media outlets further complicates the establishment of an accurate understanding of the conflict's dynamics.

This report has demonstrated that Hamas's exploitation of the civilian population is not an incidental by-product of conflict but a calculated operational choice. From tunnels beneath hospitals to arms caches in schools and mosques, Hamas has weaponised Gaza's infrastructure to achieve both tactical advantages and strategic propaganda gains. Such actions starkly contravene the LOAC, including the principles of distinction, proportionality and humanity.

The broader implications of Hamas's human shield strategy extend beyond the immediate conflict. It sets a dangerous precedent for non-state actors worldwide, normalising the use of civilian populations as tools of warfare. This underscores the urgent need for robust international responses that hold such actors accountable while safeguarding the principles of the LOAC. The international community must prioritise transparency in reporting, consistent application of legal standards and active efforts to address the root causes of asymmetric warfare tactics.

Finally, this report challenges stakeholders – including policymakers, the media and international organisations – to adopt a more balanced and evidence-based approach to analysing the Gaza conflict. Recognising Hamas as a central actor in the violence, rather than erasing it from the narrative, is essential to fostering accountability and understanding the true drivers of civilian harm. By confronting the realities of human shield tactics and their consequences, the international community can take meaningful steps toward mitigating the devastating impact of future conflicts on civilian populations.

ANNEX A – Additional Evidence for Hamas's Human Shield Strategy

1. Tunnel Network

Documentation of Hamas's tunnel network underneath the civilian area of Gaza:

- The IDF released detailed videos and images of an extensive command and control tunnel network in the Palestine Square area of Gaza City with tunnels and shafts connecting residential apartments, commercial stores, government buildings and a designated school for deaf children. Many of the shafts in this dense area of Gaza connected access points for senior Hamas leadership (December 2023).²⁰⁷
- The IDF released uncut drone footage and other videos of a tunnel and shafts running under the Bani Suheila Cemetery in the middle of Khan Younis.²⁰⁸ The strategic tunnel, about a kilometre long and 20 metres deep, held command and control rooms and living quarters, as highlighted in the videos. Cemeteries are considered a protected civilian site and are also exploited by Hamas as cover for its military tunnels (January 2024).
- The IDF released uncut video footage of the exterior of a tunnel and shaft that originates from civilian buildings in the area of Khan Younis. Footage shows the inside of the tunnel where hostages were held by Hamas (January 2024).²⁰⁹
- In January 2024, the IDF released video footage of IDF engineering corps soldiers working above ground to survey and dismantle a Hamas tunnel found in Khan Younis. The tunnel shaft leading to the discovered tunnel is clearly in the vicinity of civilian structures (see still images below).²¹⁰



²⁰⁷ <https://www.idf.il/en/idf-media-center/idf-reveals-massive-tunnel-network-in-downtown-gaza/>.

²⁰⁸ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/january-24-pr/under-gaza-s-bani-suheila-cemetery-terrorist-tunnel-and-hideouts-for-hamas-senior-leaders/>.

²⁰⁹ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/january-24-pr/behind-rigged-tunnel-shafts-and-blast-doors-the-underground-tunnel-where-hostages-were-held/>.

²¹⁰ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6381>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/a8fcd635-9d9d-40fa-a75e-f360cf6312f1>.



- The IDF released a detailed map and several uncut videos of a ten-kilometre tunnel network passing under dense areas of central Gaza, including under the Turkish Hospital and Israa University (February 2024).²¹¹
- The IDF released detailed footage and photographs of a strategic command tunnel in the area of Khan Younis; more than a kilometre long, it was used to hold hostages. The detailed footage shows the passageway of the tunnel and various rooms, including some barred cells used to imprison hostages. One of the main shafts is surrounded by civilian apartment buildings (see still image below) and a map documents the tunnel's route within the dense urban landscape of Khan Younis (February 2024).²¹²



²¹¹ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1762152533177381285>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/e6078535-abb5-4645-8f9c-f7ca92f659e3>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/02765c82-3bd5-4971-9de2-fbcafc40808>.

²¹² <https://t.me/idfofficial/6671>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/657e4f1f-fe33-4e30-aa6e-90d06358b7e4>.

- The IDF released detailed information on a 1.5-kilometre-long tunnel located close to the Rafah Crossing and winding north into Gaza, running directly under many civilian buildings and streets (see graphic of map below). Videos from inside the tunnel, various shafts and the destruction of the route were provided by the IDF (May 2024).²¹³



- The IDF released detailed maps and footage, both overhead and the interior, of a three-kilometre tunnel route with branches in central Gaza. The tunnel route is underneath civilian homes and roads (August 2024).²¹⁴
- The IDF continued to discover and demolish tunnels into the final weeks of its operation in Gaza, prior to the ceasefire. During December 2024 operations in Beit Lahia in northern Gaza, the IDF identified and dismantled a group of three tunnels spanning about 7.5 kilometres and dozens of metres in depth. The IDF released overhead footage of the tunnel route during its destruction, showing how the network ran underneath many civilian homes in Beit Lahia (see still image below).²¹⁵



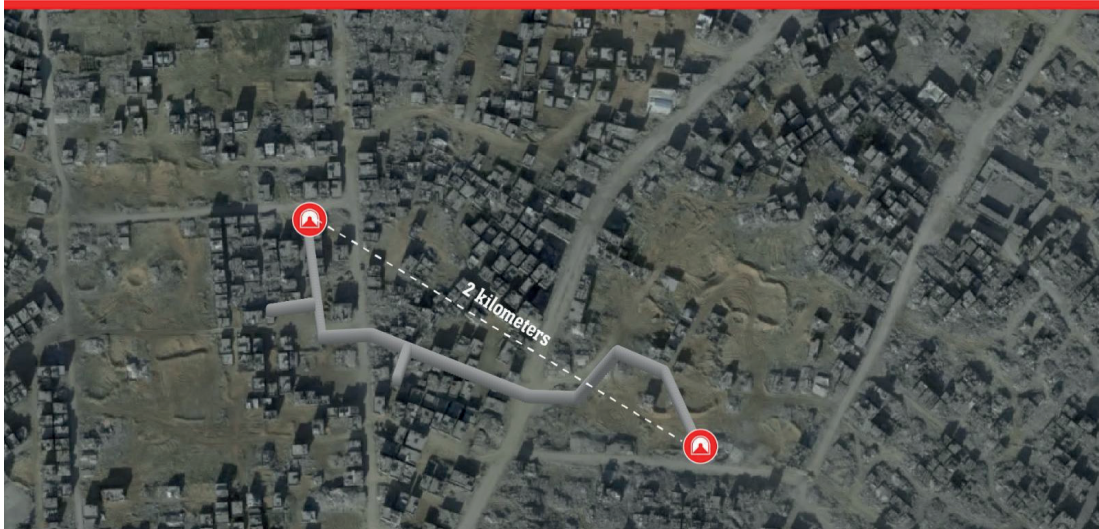
²¹³ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8156>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/df29375a-f7e7-4ab3-994f-7cb9b5c315f0>.

²¹⁴ <https://t.me/idfofficial/9437>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/anc09082024465854215486>.

²¹⁵ <https://t.me/idfofficial/13247>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/f7fe9f0c-e1f5-4e95-98c3-dd6debadad61>.

- Also in December 2024, the IDF discovered a two-kilometre tunnel in the Jabaliya area, a dense civilian neighbourhood in northern Gaza. The IDF released footage of the tunnel's destruction showing the surrounding civilian residences and an overhead image (see below) of the tunnel route.²¹⁶

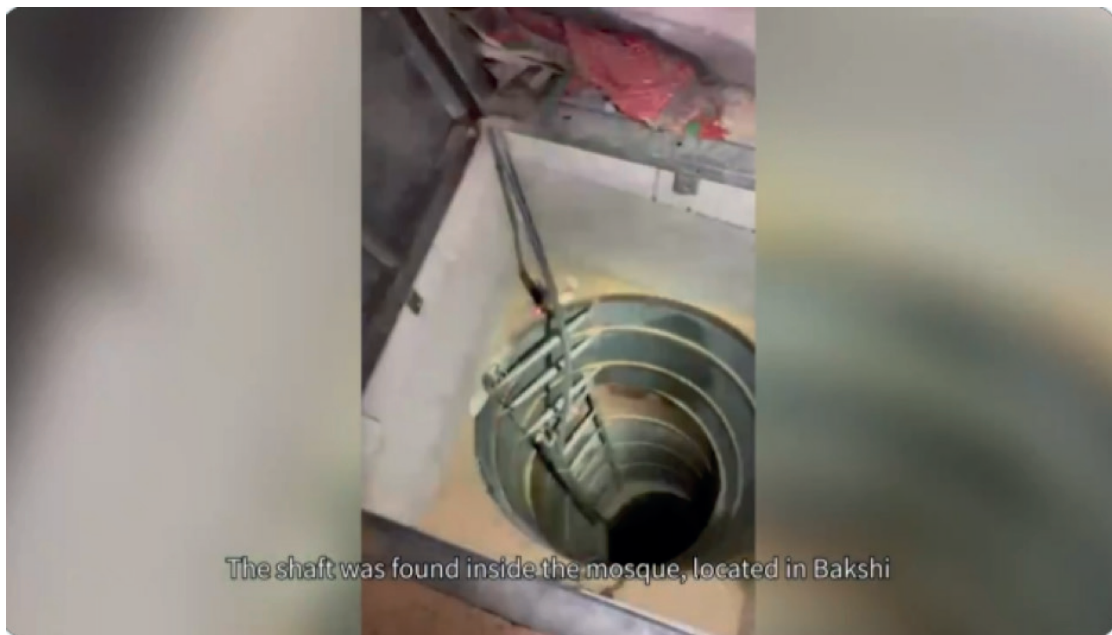
The Underground Tunnel Route in Jabaliya That was Located and Destroyed



2. Tunnel Shafts

Documentation of Hamas's tunnel shafts within civilian buildings in Gaza, including children's bedrooms:

- An IDF video from December 2023 described how the army had already destroyed 500 tunnel shafts out of more than 800 located during the first two months of the ground operation. One of the shafts was shown opening inside a mosque (see still image below).²¹⁷



²¹⁶ <https://t.me/idfofficial/13293>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC12362612>.

²¹⁷ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1731314453805707476>.

- In December 2023, the IDF released uncut video from an apartment in a residential building in Jabaliya showing a tunnel shaft with a staircase originating inside a child's bedroom (see still image below).²¹⁸



- In November and December 2023, the IDF released multiple videos and images of tunnel shafts inside and in the area of the Rantisi Hospital.²¹⁹
- The IDF released uncut footage of a two-level tunnel, dozens of metres deep, originating from the private family residence of Ahmad Andur, Commander of Hamas's northern brigade (December 2023). In the initial bombing campaign against Hamas targets in October 2023, the IDF struck senior Hamas leaders who converted their homes into military targets by connecting their residences to the tunnel network and as command centres.²²⁰

²¹⁸ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/tunnel-shaft-found-in-a-children-s-room/>.

²¹⁹ <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1740075258202235203>; <https://x.com/IDF/status/1725317635179479257>.

²²⁰ <https://x.com/Israel/status/1739026948406362194>.

- The IDF released uncut video footage of a tunnel shaft and tunnel workshop in the middle of the dense Palestine Square area in Gaza. The video shows surrounding buildings such as a community college, the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children building and other civilian structures (December 2023).²²¹
- The IDF released a video of several tunnel shafts located within the land of a fruit orchard in the Daraj Tuffah area (December 2023). Although orchards are not typically a location where civilians are present, Israel has been falsely accused by some NGOs of deliberately targeting and destroying agricultural land in Gaza to harm the civilian population. The IDF has provided evidence that Hamas placed military assets in agricultural areas as well.²²²
- In January 2024, the IDF released several detailed videos, including overhead drone footage of a tunnel route, footage inside the tunnel and other images, of a one-kilometre-long tunnel running underneath the Bani Suheila cemetery in the Khan Younis area. Israel has been accused by some NGOs of criminally damaging cemeteries, a protected civilian site. The IDF contends that it had been working to locate tunnels in these areas, as well as the bodies of deceased hostages. The detailed evidence provided in this example supports Israel's claims. One of the shafts connecting to this tunnel that is shown in the overhead footage is also adjacent to a number of civilian apartment buildings (see still image below).²²³



- The IDF released several videos and photos of tunnel shafts located inside and in the area of the Blue Beach Hotel in the northern Gaza beach area (January 2024).²²⁴

²²¹ <https://x.com/visegrad24/status/1737961641763893666>.

²²² <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/de38037d-c52f-42e0-a313-7388799c8cc9>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/6134>.

²²³ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6579>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/183b1c1a-3251-408b-8cf0-4ef8d2f1846c>.

²²⁴ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6285>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC0501202456568>.

- During operational activity in Jabalia in May 2024, the IDF located the bodies of four hostages hidden inside a tunnel. A company commander was filmed by the IDF near the shaft. He explains how the shaft was uncovered inside a residential building (see the first still image below).²²⁵
- In June 2024, the IDF released a series of videos showing booby-traps, weapons and tunnel shafts found in the Rafah area. One shaft was found inside a residential apartment, next to a sofa (see second still image below).²²⁶



- The IDF released drone footage of a tunnel shaft found in a civilian home in Rafah, in the bedroom near an armoire (July 2024).²²⁷
- The IDF released captured footage from a computer found at a Gazan residence in Shejaiya, northern Gaza. The video shows two Hamas operatives dressed in civilian clothing removing tiles from the floor of the apartment to reveal a tunnel shaft (July 2024).²²⁸
- The IDF released photographs and videos of a tunnel used for weapons manufacturing by Hamas, with several tunnel shafts shown. Two of the shafts are seen adjacent to civilian buildings, one right in front of a door to a civilian building (August 2024).²²⁹

²²⁵ https://x.com/Doron_Kadosh/status/1793643956095647970; <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/24/world/middleeast/israel-hostage-bodies-gaza-hamas.html>.

²²⁶ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8649>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC250620241092474853157>.

²²⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8827>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/006b6ab7-d9d0-4bdd-a703-e085f7b090dd>.

²²⁸ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8981>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/cfe2f2f7-644d-4bec-bb71-3da09dab3708>.

²²⁹ <https://t.me/idfofficial/9404>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC0308202492384>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC5964653>.

- The IDF has found numerous tunnel shafts specifically built inside bedrooms belonging to children, one of the most cynical manifestations of Hamas's human shield strategy. The IDF has released several examples of uncut video footage showing a bedroom, usually painted or furnished for a child, with an exposed and uncovered shaft. Three examples are shown below in still images from the videos (June and July 2024).²³⁰



- The IDF released drone footage of a tunnel shaft inside the bathroom of a residential home, accessed through a wall panel (August 2024).²³¹

²³⁰ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8300>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANCO306202465738397574>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/8483>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC140636274>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/9e39b97c-bbb0-4322-893d-31235003bdfa>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/9141>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/b5660af3-428f-443c-9e48-ae18fe28a35d>.

²³¹ <https://t.me/idfofficial/9421>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/1f077fbb-70b4-4780-bf24-627b0522d840>.

3. *Booby-Traps*

Documentation of Hamas's preparation of booby-traps within civilian buildings in Gaza:

- The IDF found and released a video of Hamas fighters filming themselves setting up booby-traps in the Beit Lahiya area of northern Gaza (December 2024).²³²
- Another set of videos captured by the IDF from Hamas shows operatives filming themselves setting up booby-traps in an alleyway adjacent to apartment buildings (see still image below). The operative can be seen covering the explosive device with cloth, an egg carton and a bag. Another video shows operatives inside an apartment working with wires and explosives (December 2023).²³³



- In June 2024, IDF released drone footage showing a booby-trap prepared inside a civilian apartment. The explosive device was placed next to a sofa (see still image below).²³⁴



²³² <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1863531116969226387>.

²³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxwhlOWvh0w&t=91s> (Two videos at link).

²³⁴ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8304>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/005eefed-3f78-49ce-a67b-e9aa9c2d0756>.

- The IDF released drone footage showing a booby-trapped tunnel shaft inside a room in a civilian apartment in Rafah. The drone begins at the entryway to the apartment and scans several rooms before revealing the rigged explosive in the home.²³⁵ In the same information package released by the IDF in June 2024, there are photos of additional shafts, explosives and weapons inside civilian buildings. An IDF battalion commander explains that their unit located “weapons hidden under children’s beds, closets, kitchens.”
- The IDF released footage of an airstrike that it said targeted a booby-trapped mosque. The secondary explosions clearly visible in the video corroborate the presence of explosives at the location (July 2024).²³⁶
- The IDF released images of booby-trapped civilian buildings photographed during combat operations in the Shejaiya area in July 2024 (see one of these images below).²³⁷



²³⁵ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8649>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/be95be90-37a5-431a-a880-d7a7620d3a5e>.

²³⁶ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8730>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/92b14719-4a48-43d0-9b75-cafeed914e7c>.

²³⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8824>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC0207202435244>.

- The IDF released video of a Hamas operative filming himself planting a hidden explosive inside a residential apartment in northern Gaza (see still image below). The explosives were discovered and the building was destroyed (December 2024).²³⁸



4. Civilian Structures Used for Combat and Weapons Storage

Documentation of how Hamas exploits civilian residences and other structures for weapons storage and combat:

- The IDF released drone footage of a Hamas operative inside the ground floor of an apartment building in Khan Younis holding an RPG and then fleeing for cover to some other civilian homes, before his elimination (December 2023).²³⁹
- The IDF released video of a Hamas sniper firing from the window of a multi-storey residential apartment building. The video shows the subsequent strike and elimination of the operative (December 2023).²⁴⁰
- Body camera footage from Hamas fighters recovered by the IDF shows three Hamas militants inside a civilian apartment in Jabalia with weapons that were fired at IDF forces. A drone subsequently eliminated the operatives (December 2023).²⁴¹



²³⁸ <https://t.me/idfofficial/13092>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/ba52e0fd-757a-49d5-8b45-203bc41cde29>.

²³⁹ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1737413168475848824>.

²⁴⁰ <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/27066e95-9af3-47fe-9a48-e08098701fa2>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/5896>.

²⁴¹ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/body-camera-footage-from-a-hamas-terrorist/>.

- Body camera footage from Hamas fighters recovered by the IDF in January 2024 shows Hamas militants inside an apartment building, while another militant in civilian clothing hides a weapon under a blanket and another is seen firing from inside a residential apartment (see still image below).²⁴²



- The IDF released video footage of a group of IDF soldiers engaging in close-quarter combat with Hamas operatives inside a residential apartment in Khan Younis. Graphic footage of the firefight and eliminated terrorist inside the apartment is shown (January 2024).²⁴³
- The IDF released video footage of Hamas operatives carrying weapons on the ground floor of a residential home, then moving to other nearby areas in between civilian structures (see still image below), before being eliminated in an IDF airstrike (January 2024).²⁴⁴



²⁴² <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/january-24-pr/exposed-video-footage-of-hamas-operational-methods/>.

²⁴³ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6357>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/26cc6603-ea41-4498-ba26-f4009511a557>.

²⁴⁴ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6394>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/7336a688-5875-48f8-a4ea-50a9cc01f6ce>.

- The IDF released footage of a Hamas operative firing an RPG from inside a free-standing civilian villa in Khan Younis (see still image below). The building was subsequently struck by the IDF (February 2024).²⁴⁵



- A key IDF tactic in Gaza is the use of drones to scan buildings and individual residences to detect Hamas operatives and booby-traps. The IDF released drone footage that identified a number of armed operatives in residential homes in the Shejaiya area of northern Gaza. Two operatives attempted to avoid detection while another attempted to disable the drone. The operatives can be seen lying down on the floor of a room with armchairs and tables, in the hopes of avoiding detection (see still image below). The IDF said that tank fire and close-range fire eliminated the operatives (July 2024).²⁴⁶



²⁴⁵ <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1758035356400722125>.

²⁴⁶ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8838>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/774197d4-31bb-4884-b293-f6a8f370bc98>.

- IDF drone footage from inside a residential apartment building in the Shejaiya area of northern Gaza identified two armed operatives in the kitchen area. The footage captured gunfire from an operative hiding under the counters (see still image below). The IDF stated that the operatives were eliminated (July 2024).²⁴⁷



- The IDF discovered various weapons, tactical drones and surveillance equipment in an UNRWA compound in Gaza City. It released a detailed map of the compound along with videos showcasing the recovered weapons (July 2024).²⁴⁸
- The IDF released body-cam footage, recordings and other material documenting a close-quarters combat encounter with a Hamas militant inside a residential apartment. During the encounter, a grenade was thrown at the IDF soldiers who subsequently eliminated the operative (September 2024).²⁴⁹

5. **Rockets Stored and Launched from Civilian Locations**

Documentation of Hamas rockets and launchers stored and fired from civilian structures and locations in Gaza:

- The IDF released video footage and images of rocket launchers buried in the ground adjacent to an amusement park in Gaza (November 2023).²⁵⁰
- The IDF released video footage of rocket launchers buried in the ground in the middle of residential buildings in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza (November 2023).²⁵¹
- The IDF released video footage of rocket launch pits uncovered in the Sheikh Zayed neighbourhood next to a school. The one-minute video shows tunnel shafts, weapons and the launch pits adjacent to the surrounding civilian buildings (November 2023).²⁵²

²⁴⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/8888>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/7d4b31fa-67d2-4b68-abb7-6f55a5f3f039>.

²⁴⁸ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/july-24-pr/round-inside-the-unrwa-hq-in-gaza-city-uavs-a-hamas-combat-compound-and-war-room/>.

²⁴⁹ <https://t.me/idfofficial/9922>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/61aacfed-9fb0-48d2-b71f-5504dbac2ef5>.

²⁵⁰ <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/66ead817-d1d5-493b-bcd8-38315190795b>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC051120236846516789>.

²⁵¹ <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/532a2757-bfa7-44ee-9b6d-4fa66d7dbc5b>.

²⁵² <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/idf-troops-located-tunnel-shafts-launch-complexes-and-underground-pits/>.

- The IDF released information and videos regarding more than 700 Hamas rocket launchers struck since the start of Israel's ground offensive against Hamas. An accompanying video showed a live rocket launch from a school and launchers positioned within civilian areas and structures. The example in the still image below shows a multi-barrelled launcher placed adjacent to a civilian apartment building (January 2024).²⁵³



- In January 2024, the IDF released video footage of ready-to-use rockets primed inside a launcher in the area of Al-Atatra in northern Gaza, which were then destroyed by the IDF. The uncut footage shows that the launcher was positioned between civilian structures. The secondary launch of the rocket is also visible (see still image below).²⁵⁴



²⁵³ <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1745792711574126689>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/6384>.

²⁵⁴ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6392>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/Ofa149db-29db-4349-bedb-e559fbf6c9e9>.

- The IDF released images of a multi-barrelled rocket launcher discovered in an orchard in the Khan Younis area (see below). Although civilians are not typically located in such an area, Israel has been accused of unlawfully targeting agriculture in Gaza. The IDF has stated that it is only attacking Hamas targets, such as launchers like the one below (January 2024).²⁵⁵



- The IDF released video footage from inside a kindergarten building, then panning to a rocket launcher positioned nearby (February 2024).²⁵⁶
- The IDF released video footage of a multi-barrelled rocket launcher discovered buried right beside a civilian home in Beit Lahia, near the border with Israel (see image below, with the launcher highlighted in red). In an accompanying video provided by the IDF, a soldier discusses the discovery of the launcher and the camera pans to show the various civilian structures nearby (November 2024).²⁵⁷



²⁵⁵ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6484>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC540789231>.

²⁵⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncLtut4DEKw&t=12s>.

²⁵⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/12452>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/7dfa759d-82fb-45f3-a90a-6efa5b877b33>.

- Hamas has also released propaganda videos documenting its own rocket-firing activities from civilian locations. For example, a video from January 2025 shows rocket launchers set up inside a grave, with Hamas operatives posing next to the launcher. Cemeteries are considered protected civilian sites.²⁵⁸



6. Hospitals Used for Military Purposes

Documentation of Hamas exploitation of hospitals and medical facilities for military purposes:

- In November 2023, the IDF released a six-minute video, with several uncut sections, showing a tunnel shaft next to the Rantisi Hospital and evidence that the basement of the hospital was used by Hamas to hold Israeli hostages. The video showed captured weapons, a motorcycle of the kind used on 7 October with bullet holes and a calendar on the wall titled “Battle of Al-Aqsa Flood 7/10/2023”. IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagari was heavily criticised for stating that the calendar was used by Hamas operatives as a guardian list, but clarified later that same day that it was a calendar listing the days beginning on 7 October. The core details of the video, including uncut footage of a tunnel shaft near the hospital, are undisputed.²⁵⁹ An ABC News team that visited Gaza showed video of a tunnel shaft that the reporter confirmed was located at Rantisi Hospital.²⁶⁰
- The IDF released video footage of an armed operative, dressed in civilian clothes, carrying an RPG next to the entrance of the Al-Quds Hospital.²⁶¹ Some observers pointed out that the operative was not filmed on the actual stairs of the hospital,

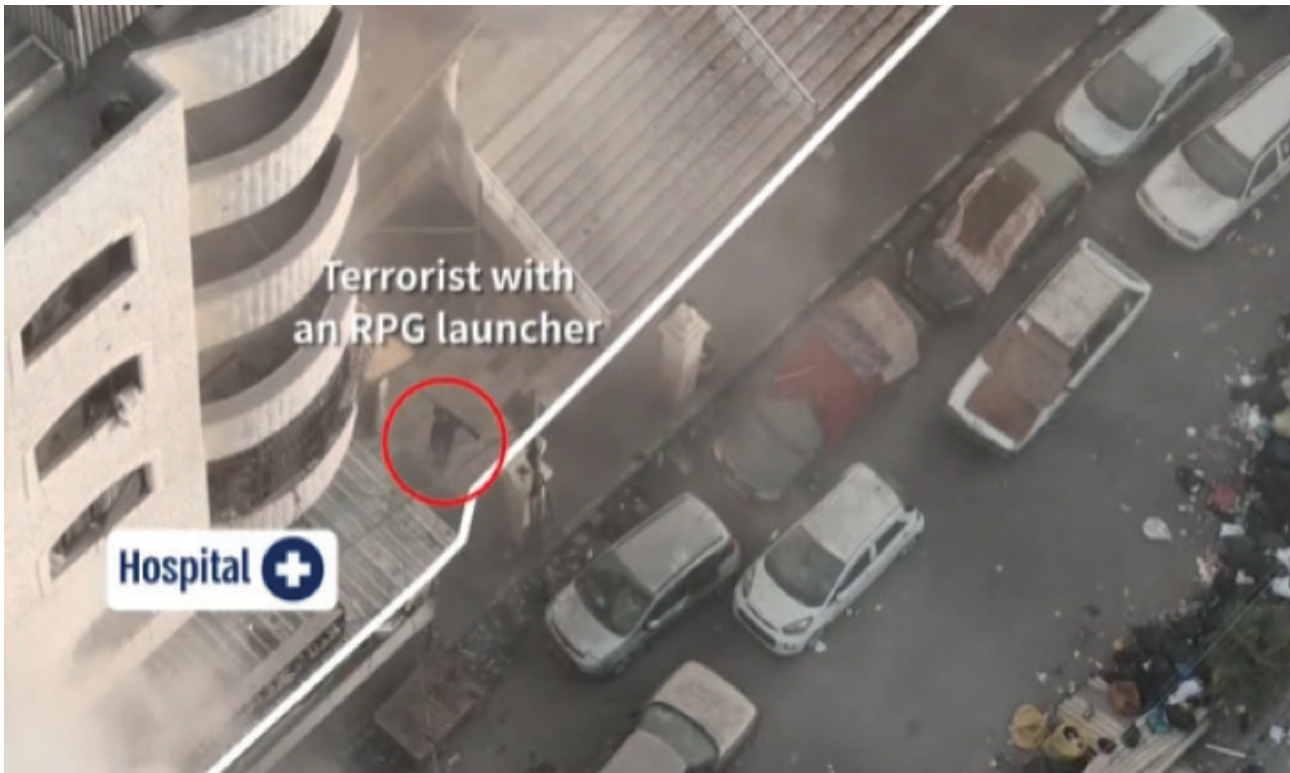
²⁵⁸ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1879180898610168178>.

²⁵⁹ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1724169252054188276>.

²⁶⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FACrMHbC1c8>.

²⁶¹ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1724055160471564623>.

but in an area between a civilian building and the hospital; regardless, the evidence is clear that the militant used protected civilian locations in and near hospitals for combat (November 2023).



- The IDF released footage showing live firing of weapons by Hamas operatives emanating from inside the Sheikh Hamad Hospital (November 2023).²⁶²
- The IDF reported finding a car belonging to Israeli hostage Samar Talalka (a Toyota Corolla with Israeli licence plates), as well as a Hamas pick-up truck with weapons similar to those used in the 7 October attack, in the grounds of the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza. The IDF also found bloodstains of another hostage inside the car.²⁶³ Drone footage released by the IDF shows the hospital, then moves towards the area with the vehicles.
- In May 2024, three IDF soldiers were killed by a booby-trapped tunnel shaft located inside a medical clinic in Rafah. The IDF revealed details of the operation which killed Staff Sergeant Amir Galivove, Staff Sergeant Uri Bar Or and Staff Sergeant Ido Appel. The IDF released an overhead image of the buildings and the shafts that were uncovered.²⁶⁴
- The IDF released several videos and photos of Hamas operatives firing from a medical clinic in the Jabalia neighbourhood in north Gaza. The still image below shows live firing by the Hamas operatives at IDF troops from inside the clinic; the projectiles are visible in the footage. The video also shows a precision airstrike that hit the specific area where the operatives were positioned. Secondary explosions are seen, which confirms the storage of weapons in the clinic (October 2024).²⁶⁵

²⁶² <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/exploitation-of-the-sheikh-hamad-hospital/>.

²⁶³ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/troops-find-car-belonging-to-hostage-armed-hamas-truck-in-northern-gaza-hospital/>.

²⁶⁴ <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1796157907161014390>.

²⁶⁵ <https://t.me/idfofficial/11290>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/db35ea79-4f5f-446f-bb4b-cf54be0f79f8>.



- In December 2024, the IDF released a video of Hamas fighters filming themselves planting explosives underground in the area of the Indonesian Hospital in northern Gaza (see still image below).²⁶⁶



7. Schools Used for Military Purposes

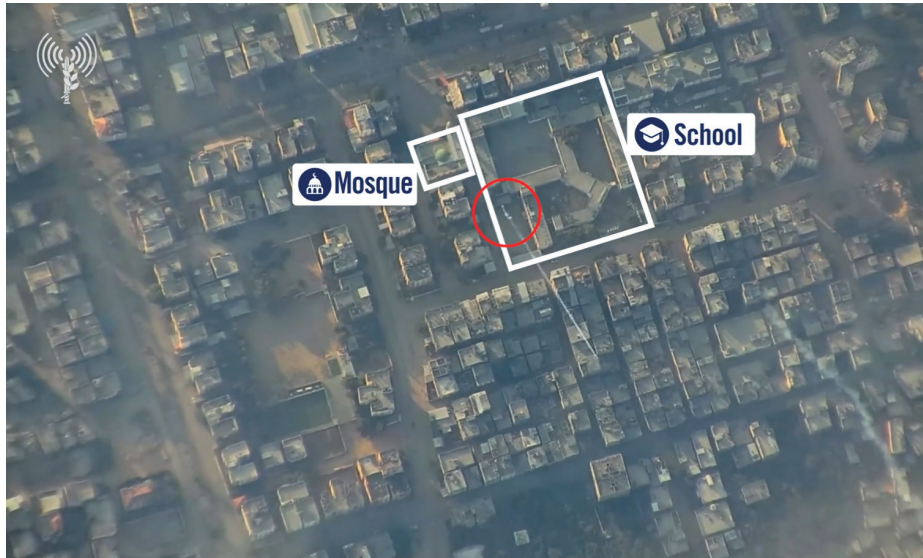
Documentation of Hamas exploitation of schools for military purposes:

- The IDF released video footage of a tunnel shaft located 15 metres away from a school building in Beit Lahiya in north Gaza (December 2023).²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1873786517518508231>.

²⁶⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/5608>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/3194e030-e06b-4f4b-8ac9-3cc07015c778>.

- The IDF captured real-time video footage of a rocket launched by Hamas operatives from the grounds of a school and adjacent to a mosque (see still image below with the smoke plume visible), all within a dense residential neighbourhood (January 2024).²⁶⁸



- Many tunnels have been found by the IDF underneath and originating from schools in Gaza, confirming their exploitation by Hamas for their military operations. The images below from a one-minute uncut video released by the IDF show a tunnel shaft found in a school in Jabaliya (May 2024).²⁶⁹



²⁶⁸ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6384>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/f41cba51-2433-4c32-92d2-64721e6dfd5b>.

²⁶⁹ https://x.com/i24NEWS_EN/status/1796479484037914649.

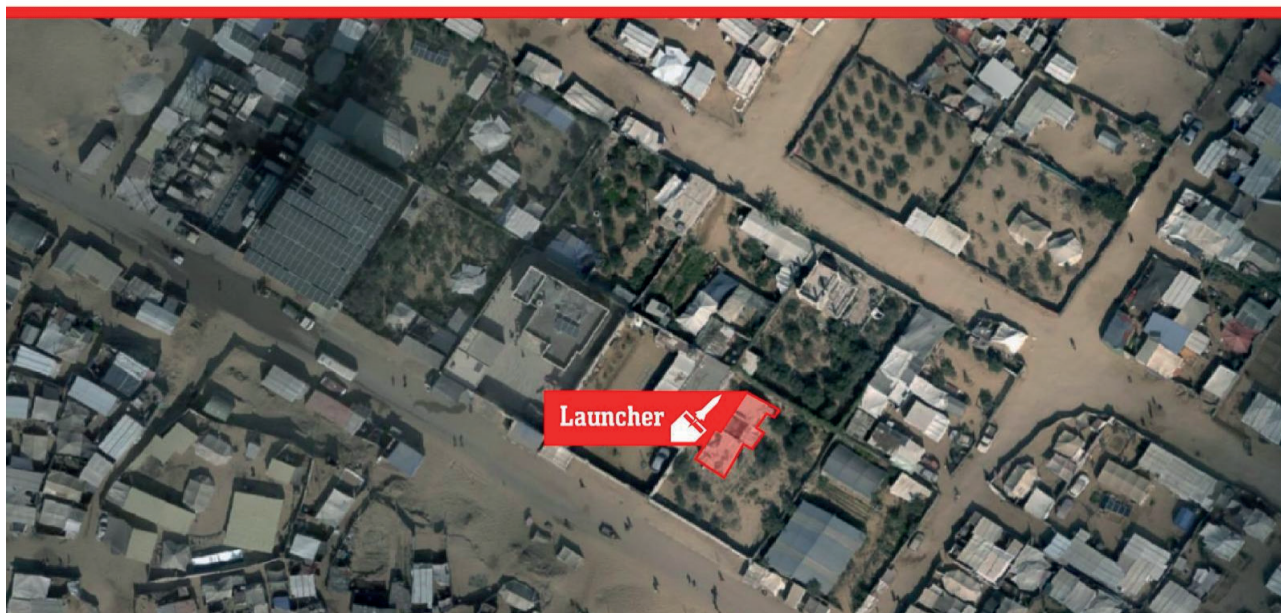
- The IDF released overhead footage of the destruction of a 500-metre-long tunnel and branches in Rafah, as well as a map of the tunnel showing detail of a shaft that was adjacent to an UNRWA school (June 2024).²⁷⁰

8. Humanitarian Zones Used for Military Purposes

Documentation of Hamas exploitation of humanitarian zones for military purposes:

- The IDF provided video evidence and detail of a rocket launch site in regard to 12 rockets fired towards Israel from a launcher placed near tents of evacuated civilians in the Mawasi humanitarian zone (December 2023).²⁷¹
- The IDF released uncut video footage of a buried rocket launcher array with close-up footage of the launcher and an overhead pan to the nearby civilian tents. A detailed map was also presented showing the location of three launchers 20 metres from the tents, further corroborating the video evidence. Additional video shows a precise airstrike on the launchers (March 2024).²⁷²
- The IDF released an overhead image of a loaded rocket launcher placed in a humanitarian area surrounded by tents and other civilian structures (see image below). The IDF issued a statement that it had provided advance warnings to the civilians in the area to evacuate before the airstrike against the launcher was carried out (November 2024).²⁷³

Strike on a Loaded Launcher Aimed Toward Israeli Territory in the Humanitarian Area



- Several Hamas propaganda videos show fighters firing rockets from inside tents. In August 2024, Hamas released a video on its Telegram channel showing operatives dressed in civilian clothing firing a rocket from within a tent (see still image below).²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ <https://x.com/manniefabian/status/1807432675256353185>; https://x.com/adler_zvi/status/1807437860062003466.

²⁷¹ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/idf-press-releases-israel-at-war/december-23-pr/hamas-launches-rockets-from-within-humanitarian-zones/>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/76e766bb-1a7d-4c6b-8274-b9b4471f7968>.

²⁷² <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/4bd626a1-436b-435d-a6a5-2d7f56f50253>; <https://t.me/idfofficial/7213>.

²⁷³ <https://t.me/idfofficial/12529>; <https://idfanc.activetrail.biz/ANC13112024548940412>.

²⁷⁴ <https://x.com/visegrad24/status/1823461769001460215>.



- In November 2024, Palestinian Islamic Jihad released a video of its militants hiding inside a tent preparing rockets to launch at Israel. Although the location is not disclosed, the use of tents similar to those in a humanitarian zone is intended to blur the lines between combatant and civilian targets.²⁷⁵

9. *Hamás's Policy of Dressing in Civilian Clothes*

Documentation of how Hamás dresses in civilian clothes for combat:

- The IDF recorded a video of a Hamás cell armed with RPGs operating among civilian buildings in northern Gaza (see still image below). The cell was identified and eliminated by the IDF (December 2023).²⁷⁶



²⁷⁵ <https://x.com/Osint613/status/1858174390820581802>.

²⁷⁶ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/a-terrorist-cell-firing-anti-tank-missiles-from-civilian-areas-in-the-gaza/>.

- Captured body-cam footage from Hamas operatives shows several of them sitting beside a building in Khan Yunis with weapons (see still image below). The same footage shows another group booby-trapping a civilian building (February 2024).²⁷⁷



- An IDF drone identified a Hamas operative dressed in civilian clothing in the process of attempting to launch a rocket at Israel from a structure in Jabaliya that held additional weapons (see still image below). The operative was eliminated (November 2024).²⁷⁸



²⁷⁷ <https://t.me/idfofficial/6716>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/9e62eb8e-b8ed-4a0d-b0c1-72b15df88331>.

²⁷⁸ <https://t.me/idfofficial/13055>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/67ad998b-8cfa-4aa6-ab1c-6a5987da125c>.

10. *Hamas Ruses of War and Other Human Shield Tactics*

The IDF has released many videos and photographs of some of these ruses of war by Hamas. Here are some examples:

- The IDF released a video showing a child's school bag found lying in a field in Gaza containing a remote-activated exploding device weighing seven kilograms (October 2023).²⁷⁹
- The IDF released a video and images of children's clothing, a doll and backpacks rigged with explosives. According to the IDF, the backpacks had speakers playing sounds of crying and were placed near a tunnel shaft to lure IDF soldiers to the area to be ambushed (December 2023).²⁸⁰
- The IDF released an audio recording between two Islamic Jihad operatives describing how weapons were transferred inside baby strollers (November 2023).²⁸¹
- The IDF released video footage of weapons found hidden inside a large teddy bear, all within a school building (December 2023).²⁸²
- In September 2024, the IDF released a video of soldiers scanning a residential apartment in the Tel al-Sultan neighbourhood of Rafah. The footage shows soldiers discovering weapons stored inside a child's backpack (see still image).²⁸³



²⁷⁹ <https://x.com/IDF/status/1716143946936488161>.

²⁸⁰ <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/a-terrorist-ambush-that-used-dolls-as-a-lure/>.

²⁸¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pnWYBDsEwaU&t=2s>.

²⁸² <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/war-on-hamas-2023-resources/a-teddy-bear-stuffed-with-sniper-rifles-and-ammunition-was-found-in-schools-in-gaza/>.

²⁸³ <https://t.me/idfofficial/10067>; <https://videoidf.azureedge.net/1c372b2f-7713-448b-b91e-461829ea308d>.

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